CITY HILIGHTS

The Truth Speaks

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At least 6 injured as aircraft makes forced landing

BHUBANESWAR

A small nine-seater aircraft made an emergency crash landing on Saturday around nine kilometres from the Rourkela airstrip after a technical fault was detected mid-flight, officials said. The incident involved a plane operating under the Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS) of IndiaOne Air. Biju Patnaik International Airport (BPIA) confirmed that the pilot, upon noticing a technical snag, attempted a belly landing on a grassland, ensuring the safety of all passengers. The pilot sustained injuries during the crash, while the co-pilot and four passengers remained unharmed. The extent of the pilot's injuries has not yet been disclosed. Transport Minister Bibhuti Bhusan Jena said, "The pilot executed a crash landing in a plain field roughly 10 km before the runway.

Cold wave likely in parts of north Karnataka: IMD

BENGALURU

Cold wave conditions are likely to prevail over parts of north interior Karnataka over the next 24 hours, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said on Saturday, warning residents to brace for lower-than-normal minimum temperatures.

According to the IMD bulletin, minimum temperatures have dipped three to six degrees Celsius below normal at a few places across interior Karnataka. Fog was also reported at isolated locations, adding to the chill during the early morning hours. Cold wave conditions were observed in Vijayapura during the past 24 hours, the department said.

BJP defending Centre despite injustice to state is a mistake: CM

CM Siddaramaiah criticised Karnataka BJP for defending Centre despite injustice, signalled readiness for MGNREGA agitation, Kerala language row protest, Governor talks

BENGALURU

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Saturday said it was a "grave mistake" for the BJP in Karnataka to justify every action of the Union government, even when the state suffers injustice. Speaking to the media after an event at the KEB Engineers' Association on Race Course Road, he said calling injustice to Karnataka as "justice" was a serious offence.

Responding to Union Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy's invitation for a debate on the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), the Chief Minister said the state government was fully prepared not only for a debate but also for a larger agitation if needed. However, he declined to respond to Kumaraswamy's "lease-based CM" remark, dismissing BJP and JD(S) leaders as habitual liars.

On Kerala making Malayalam compulsory as the first language in schools in border areas, Siddaramaiah said he had already written to the Kerala Chief Minister and warned that Karnataka would launch a protest if the issue was not resolved.

Addressing questions about the hate speech Bill pending with the Governor, he said the government would meet the Governor and provide a detailed explanation.

CM flags lapses in prosecution, calls for urgent reforms

Inaugurating a training workshop and the 17th state-level conference, Siddaramaiah expressed concern over the functioning of government prosecutors. He said some prosecutors attend courts without preparation and hesitate to argue cases, leading to weak prosecution. He also criticised practices such as charge sheets being drafted by writers instead of investigating officers, which results in courts rejecting such cases and offenders escaping punishment. Citing NCRB data, the CM said Karnataka's conviction rate stood at just 52%, placing it 22nd nationally, far behind states like Kerala, Mizoram and Delhi. He stressed the need for training in handling economic, cyber and technical crimes.

Kerala CM rejects concerns over Malayalam Language Bill

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Saturday dismissed concerns raised over the proposed Malayalam Language Bill, 2025, stating that the apprehensions do not reflect the actual provisions of the legislation. His remarks came a day after Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah wrote to him expressing strong objections to the Bill, warning that Karnataka would oppose it through all constitutional means if it undermined the rights of linguistic minorities. In a post on social media platform X, Vijayan said the Kerala government remained firmly committed to constitutional values of secularism and pluralism. He clarified that the Bill includes a clear non-obstante clause aimed at safeguarding the rights of linguistic minorities, particularly Kannada- and Tamil-speaking communities.

Iran protests near 2-week as authorities intensify crackdown

DUBAI

Demonstrations persist nationwide as Tehran issues harsh warnings, amid internet shutdowns and rising casualties.

Protests sweeping across Iran edged closer to the two-week mark on Saturday, as authorities intensified a nationwide crackdown and escalated threats against demonstrators challenging the country's leadership. Despite near-total internet shutdowns and restrictions on international phone calls, unrest has continued across multiple cities, underscoring the depth of public anger.

According to the U.S.-based Human Rights Activists News Agency, at least 65 people have been killed and more than 2,300 detained since demonstrations erupted on December 28, initially over the collapse of the Iranian rial and deepening economic hardship. The protests have since evolved into broader calls against Iran's theocratic system.

Tehran sharpened its rhetoric on Saturday, with Iran's attorney general Mohammad Movahedi Azad warning that anyone participating in protests would be deemed an "enemy of God," a charge that can carry the death penalty. A statement broadcast on state television said even those accused of assisting protesters would face prosecution without "leniency, compassion or indulgence."

Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has signaled a firm response, while Iranian state media has sought to project control, airing images of pro-government rallies and reporting casualties among security forces. However, videos verified by the Associated Press contradicted official claims of calm, showing thousands protesting in parts of northern Tehran, chanting slogans against Khamenei.

Semiofficial outlets close to Iran's Revolutionary Guard reported violent clashes in several cities, including Isfahan and Gachsaran, with deaths among Basij militia members and police officers. Funerals for security personnel were broadcast from cities such as Qom.

International reaction has been swift. U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio voiced support for Iranian protesters, warning Tehran against further escalation. Meanwhile, exiled Crown Prince Reza Pahlavi renewed calls for demonstrations over the weekend, urging Iranians to reclaim public spaces with national symbols.

3 held for attempting to offer namaz inside Ram temple

AYODHYA

Three people, including a young woman, were detained on Saturday after allegedly attempting to offer namaz inside the Ram Janmabhoomi temple complex in Ayodhya, triggering swift intervention by security forces and raising serious security concerns.

According to officials and eyewitnesses, the trio—two youths and a woman—entered the high-security temple premises through the D1 gate, claiming to be residents of Kashmir. One of the youths reportedly sat near the temple kitchen area and began offering namaz, following which security personnel immediately intervened and took all three into custody for questioning.

The detained individuals were dressed in traditional Kashmiri attire. One of the youths was identified as Abu Ahmed Sheikh from Shopian district in Jammu and Kashmir. The woman has been identified as Sofia, while the identity of the third individual is yet to be officially confirmed. Eyewitnesses alleged that the trio raised religious slogans when stopped by security staff.

Soon after the incident, local police, intelligence agencies, and senior administrative officials rushed to the spot. However, neither the district administration nor the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust has issued an official statement so far.

The site is guarded round the clock by the Special Security Force (SSF), comprising personnel from the PAC and state police, with nearly 200 officers deployed at all times.

To further strengthen security, authorities have announced plans to set up a National Security Guard (NSG) hub in Ayodhya. An ₹11-crore integrated control centre is already operational, coordinating efforts among police, CRPF, SSF, and intelligence agencies.

Kolkata police starts probe against unknown ED officials

KOLKATA

The Kolkata Police on Saturday launched an investigation into the alleged removal of documents and electronic data during recent Enforcement Directorate (ED) raids at the residence of I-PAC chief Prateek Jain and the firm's office in Salt Lake. Multiple FIRs have been registered against unidentified ED officials, including two complaints filed by West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee. Police said teams have collected CCTV footage and DVR recordings from Jain's Loudon Street residence and recorded statements from household staff and security personnel to identify those involved. Cases have been lodged under provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita relating to theft, criminal trespass and intimidation, along with Section 66 of the IT Act covering computer-related offences. A suo motu case has also been filed. According to police.

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BJP, JD (S) welcomes special Assembly session on G RAM G

BENGALURU

The BJP and JD(S) on Saturday welcomed the Karnataka government's decision to convene a two-day special session of the Legislative Assembly to discuss the newly enacted VB-G RAM G Act, which replaces the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA).

Speaking at a joint press conference, BJP state president B.Y. Vijayendra and JD(S) leader H.D. Kumaraswamy criticised Congress for spreading "misinformation" about the revamped scheme. Vijayendra said the session would allow legislators to debate what MGNREGA achieved under the UPA and how the Modi-led NDA has implemented rural employment initiatives over the past 11 years. He emphasised the importance of accountability in the system, noting that over ₹7 lakh crore has been spent on MGNREGA and there should be no leakage or misuse of funds.

> **Centre has revamped MGNREGA to strengthen rural livelihoods while improving infrastructure.**
> —H.D. Kumaraswamy, Union Minister

Kumaraswamy explained that VB-G RAM G increases workdays from 100 to 125, guarantees a daily wage of ₹370, and integrates welfare with rural infrastructure development. He said the act uses AI, GPS tracking, and real-time dashboards to curb corruption while ensuring benefits for single women, the elderly, persons with disabilities, transgender individuals, and tribal groups.

Reacting to the opposition's comments, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah reaffirmed the state government's readiness to debate the issue and, if needed, launch a major agitation. He said a special session would pass a resolution demanding the re-implementation of MGNREGA, with the state Cabinet also planning legal action against the VB-G RAM G Act passed during Parliament's recent winter session.

QUICK READ

Woman shot dead; link to husband's murder probed

NEW DELHI: A woman was allegedly shot dead in northwest Delhi's Shalimar Bagh on Saturday, with police suspecting the killing to be linked to the murder of her husband, which took place a few years ago and remains unresolved. The deceased has been identified as Rachna Yadav. Police said Yadav had been actively pursuing the investigation into her husband's killing and was pressing authorities for justice. Some of the accused in that case are still absconding and are now being treated as key suspects in her murder.

UPSC mandates facial authentication for candidates

NEW DELHI: All candidates appearing for recruitment examinations conducted by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) will now undergo facial authentication at exam centres, officials said on Saturday, in a move aimed at strengthening the integrity of the examination process. The decision follows the successful implementation of a pilot project using AI-enabled facial recognition technology during the NDA and NA II Examination, 2025 and the CDS II Examination, 2025. The system digitally matched candidates' faces with photographs submitted during registration.

IDENTITY LEAK ROW

'Exposing my identity': Unnao rape survivor seeks for support

NEW DELHI

The survivor of the 2017 Unnao rape case on Saturday appealed for public support, alleging that the daughters of expelled BJP leader and convict Kuldeep Singh Sengar, along with their supporters, are exposing her identity on social media, putting her safety at risk. In a video message, she stated, "Kuldeep Singh Sengar's two daughters and their supporters have, for the past few days, been exposing my identity… I am seeing it everywhere, on Facebook, Instagram, everywhere."

Sengar, a former Uttar Pradesh MLA, was convicted in December 2019 and sentenced to life imprisonment with a ₹25 lakh fine. Earlier on January 1, the survivor had urged people across caste lines to stand with her, highlighting a sustained online smear campaign targeting her and her husband. She alleged that posts supporting Sengar were being circulated online in connection with a January 11 gathering at Jantar Mantar, reportedly organised by his daughters. "I am also a daughter of this country. Please become my voice. A criminal has no caste," she appealed.

The Supreme Court recently stayed a Delhi High Court order that had suspended Sengar's life sentence and granted him bail. The apex court ruled he shall remain in custody, following a CBI plea highlighting the severity of the crime. The High Court's bail order, which included several conditions, had sparked protests from the survivor, her family, and activists.

Sengar's daughter, Ishita, later expressed her distress in an open letter, describing the prolonged social harassment her family has faced. Meanwhile, the survivor's mother welcomed the Supreme Court decision, reiterating her demand for justice.

Woman raped by 5, including driver of police vehicle

Korba: A 19-year-old woman was allegedly raped by five men, including the driver of a Dial 112 police helpline vehicle, on the night of January 8. One of the accused, known to the victim, lured her to a deserted house in Bankimongra, where the driver and four others reportedly took turns assaulting her. The perpetrators fled, leaving her unconscious. The victim reached home and informed her family, who rushed her to a hospital and alerted the police. A zero FIR was filed at Civil Lines, later transferred to Bankimongra police. Two accused have been detained; three remain at large.

QUICK READ

Taxi Driver arrested for misbehavior with passenger

Bengaluru

A bike taxi driver, Vivek, was arrested by Annapurneswari Nagar police after allegedly misbehaving with a female passenger on January 7. The 29-year-old woman, a manager at a private company in Manyatha Tech Park, had booked the ride from Nagarabhavi due to heavy traffic. During the trip, Vivek reportedly bent backward, harassed her, and made threatening remarks. The woman shouted and called the police helpline, leading to his arrest. Police confirmed they traced and detained Vivek. The case highlights concerns about passenger safety in e-taxis. Authorities are investigating further to ensure such incidents are prevented.

Gas leak fire injures five workers seriously

Bengaluru

Five workers from Bihar were seriously injured in a fire caused by a cooking gas leak in Chokkasandra, Bengaluru, Friday morning. Anshuraj Kumar (18), Hussain Khan (21), Rohit Chaudhary (20), Arabeg Alam (26), and Muzaffar Hussain (19) were lighting a lighter to make tea when gas from a cylinder ignited. They all lived in the same room. The injured were admitted to Victoria Hospital. Peenya police have registered a case and are investigating. Authorities warned residents to handle gas cylinders carefully. This incident follows similar tragedies in Bengaluru, including deadly cylinder explosions in PGs and fatal geyser leaks last month.

Home Minister warns strict action on migrants

HM warns of strict action against undocumented Bangladeshi migrants in Bengaluru

BENGALURU

Karnataka Home Minister G. Parameshwara has issued a strict warning regarding undocumented migrants in Bengaluru. He said if Bangladeshis are found living in the city, authorities will take note and deport them. Homeowners renting properties to such individuals must check documents carefully and ensure rent is paid, or face action, the minister added.

Speaking near his Sadashivanagar residence, Parameshwara said, "We have been acting against Bangladeshi migrants for some time. Every police station has instructions to identify and deport them. We are very strict on this issue." He also called for better border management, urging the central government and BSF to monitor entries more effectively, as some migrants reportedly pay to cross borders illegally.

The minister noted that similar scrutiny will be applied to Africans living in parts of Bengaluru, including Kothanur and Lingarajpur. He emphasized that actions would follow central rules.

On political matters, Parameshwara addressed supporters' wishes for him to become Chief Minister. "Every politician has supporters. It is natural they want someone to rise," he said, defending the public's enthusiasm.

He also spoke about Bengaluru being ranked the top city for women's safety. The assessment considered infrastructure, technology, and policing. Parameshwar highlighted that the city has improved vigilance, including monitoring incidents closely during New Year celebrations to prevent accidents. Regarding pending legislation, he said the Governor has delayed signing a few bills, including the Dalit internal reservation bill, while others have been approved.

Finally, on handing over cases in Bellary and Hubballi to the CID, he said, "The opposition suspects we are hiding something. We are transparent and the truth will be shared with the public."

He also addressed language concerns, stating Kannada should be encouraged, particularly in border areas like Kasaragod, without disturbing local linguistic balance.

Shivaganga Basavaraj criticizes Rayareddy's statement

BENGALURU

Basavaraj stressed collective decision-making, saying all MLAs deserve respect, and criticized selectively issuing notices while ignoring statements from Rayareddy, Rajanna, and others.

Channagiri MLA Shivaganga Basavaraj has strongly criticized Congress leader Basavaraj Rayareddy for claiming that Siddaramaiah will remain Chief Minister until 2028. Speaking to the media, Basavaraj questioned Rayareddy's authority to make such statements and called on the party high command to address the issue.

"Who is Rayareddy to speak like this? Did the high command authorize him when he made these comments in Bengaluru?" Basavaraj asked. He added that elders in the party should act responsibly and respect every MLA's role. "I am the first winner, and when I speak, it will carry weight. We remained silent only because the high command advised us," he said.

Basavaraj also emphasized that party decisions should be made collectively. "Every MLA has his own respect. It is not right to give notice to one person while ignoring others," he said, indicating dissatisfaction with how statements from Rayareddy and others like Rajanna were handled.

The MLA said he will comment further on party matters after Sankranti, which falls on January 16. "The budget session is in March; there is no need to rush statements now. I will speak after Sankranti," he added.

Basavaraj stressed that statements from leaders should reflect the high command's decisions. "If Siddaramaiah himself says he is committed to the high command's directions, that should be enough. Rayareddy's comments should not be taken seriously. The party needs to take note, as such remarks can create confusion," he said.

He also noted that appointments like Rayareddy's role as Assam observer should be seen as rewards for hard work, not as a platform to make unilateral political claims. Basavaraj called for fairness and clarity in communication to maintain unity within the party.

The issue has sparked discussion among Congress circles, highlighting the importance of collective decision-making and respecting the party hierarchy in sensitive matters regarding leadership and appointments.

Despite a clarification, allegations persist as videos circulate, alleging Yashaswini was abused and humiliated by staff and seniors

Dental student suicide case takes shocking turn in Anekal

ANEKAL

The suicide case of a dental student in Anekal has taken a new turn with the recovery of a death note stating that no one is responsible for her death. The student, identified as Yashaswini, was found dead on January 9 in Chandapura on the outskirts of Bengaluru.

Earlier, Yashaswini's mother had accused the college authorities of humiliating and harassing her daughter, claiming this pushed her to take the extreme step. However, police have now recovered a handwritten death note from Yashaswini, which has added a fresh angle to the investigation. In the note, Yashaswini reportedly wrote that she was not fit to live and requested forgiveness. She clearly mentioned that no one should be held responsible for her death. The note also included emotional lines where she expressed that she was not a good daughter and ended with a message of thanks.

Despite the note, allegations against the college have not stopped. A video showing Yashaswini crying on the college premises is still circulating on social media. It is alleged that she was verbally abused by college staff and seniors. Her parents claim she was insulted with derogatory remarks and humiliated in front of classmates.

According to the complaint, Yashaswini had taken leave on January 7 due to eye pain. When she returned to college, lecturers allegedly mocked her about using eye drops and questioned her in front of students. She was also reportedly denied permission to present a seminar and was not assigned a radiology case.

Yashaswini, aged 23, was a third-year student in the Oral Medicine and Radiology department of a private dental college in Bommanahalli. Following her death, her classmates staged a protest outside the mortuary, demanding strict action against the principal and lecturers involved. Police are continuing their investigation.

DK Suresh taunts HDK over 'Daddy is home' remark

BENGALURU

Former MP DK Suresh has mocked the use of the phrase "Daddy is home" by HD Kumaraswamy (HDK) as he commented on the JD(S) leader's return to Karnataka politics. Suresh questioned, "Who is Daddy? What does Daddy Is Home mean?" and added that HDK should resign first before attempting a political comeback in the state.

Suresh further said that HDK's current responsibilities are at the national level and suggested that he focus on serving the country before returning to state politics. He criticized JD(S) leaders for alleged inaction, mentioning a CD factory in Holenarasipur and Padmanabha Nagar, asking why the government had not addressed issues like employment and development in these areas.

Highlighting local concerns, Suresh also referred to Ganiga Ravi in Mandya and questioned what efforts had been made by the state government regarding land and job allocation. He emphasized that promises of justice and development should be prioritized over political theatrics.

The remarks come amid speculation over HDK's increasing involvement in Karnataka's political affairs, prompting debates on the role of senior leaders in state versus national responsibilities.

Congress slams JDS with 'Haasan Blue' film dig

BENGALURU

The political spat between HD Kumaraswamy (HDK) and DK Suresh has escalated, with Congress taking a sharp dig at JD(S) over a controversial tweet. The Congress party mocked JD(S) leaders by referencing a fictitious film titled Haasan Blue, suggesting that the party has a "blue film" history.

In its tweet, Congress wrote, "You have a lot of blue film producers, directors, and actors. The film Haasan Blue, produced and acted in by your boy, is world famous! It has made Karnataka's fame fly even in Hollywood." The post continued sarcastically, highlighting jailed leaders and their antics, and ridiculed

JD(S) for attempting to "build another story" on past controversies. The tweet was intended as a humorous yet pointed attack, implying that JD(S) leaders' political theatrics and personal feuds are drawing unnecessary attention, similar to scandalous film plots.

The viral exchange marks another chapter in the ongoing HDK-DK political rivalry, which has seen several personal and party-level jabs on social media.

BENGALURU: DRUNK DRIVER CRASHES, PEDESTRIANS ESCAPE

BENGALURU

A terrifying incident in Bengaluru's Indiranagar left pedestrians shaken but lucky after a drunk driver crashed into a restaurant wall. CCTV footage captured the harrowing moment when a speeding car narrowly missed a group of people standing outside Barbeque Nation.

The driver, identified as 42-year-old Derrick Tony, was reportedly under the influence of alcohol. Police said he was driving at high speed from 18th Main Road and missed a left turn. Instead, his car jumped the divider and smashed into the restaurant wall, causing significant damage. Before hitting the wall, the vehicle also struck a two-wheeler, whose driver, Jabir Ahmed, suffered minor injuries and was taken to a hospital.

The pedestrians outside the restaurant narrowly avoided being hit. Authorities confirmed no fatalities occurred, though the incident left several people in shock. CCTV videos circulating online showed the car dangerously close to the bystanders. A case has been registered at Jeevan Bheema Nagar Traffic Police Station, and an investigation is underway. Police have urged citizens to remain cautious and report reckless driving.

This accident comes shortly after a similar tragedy in Jaipur, where a drunk driver rammed into pedestrians, resulting in one death and multiple injuries. Officials warn against driving under the influence and emphasize road safety for everyone.

Rejected love threat ends with police arrest

NELAMANGALA

Nelamangala rural police have arrested a young man who allegedly threatened to kill a young woman after she rejected his love and was seen moving around with a gun in public.

The accused has been identified as Shubham, a native of Bihar. He was working as a pizza delivery boy and had reportedly been following a nursing student for the last three years. Despite repeated attempts, the woman rejected his proposal.

Police said Shubham suspected that the woman was in love with someone else. Angry and upset, he allegedly bought a gun online and planned to attack her. CCTV footage showed him walking through Mallapur village in broad daylight holding a firearm, creating panic among local residents. On the day of the incident, the woman had come to her college in an Uber cab to collect her examination hall ticket. While travelling, she informed the Uber driver about the threats she was facing from Shubham.

Restaurant owner summoned over complaint

BENGALURU

A legal dispute over a failed business partnership has landed B A R Mohammed Ali, owner of Narmada Chain of Restaurants and associated with Meghana Foods, in the spotlight after a woman accused him of misbehaviour.

According to the complaint filed with HSR Layout police, the woman alleged that in November 2024, Ali attempted to kiss her when she visited his flat to discuss their business matters. Police noted that the complaint comes more than a

year after the alleged incident. Authorities confirmed that the complaint appears to be a counter-action, following a cheating case Ali had earlier lodged against the woman and her family members.

Based on the FIR, Ali has been summoned to give a detailed statement to the investigating officer. Speaking to the press, Ali said he would fully cooperate with the investigation. He denied any misbehaviour, saying the dispute was purely financial.

Ali claimed he had invested heavily, covering rent, staff salaries, and operational costs, while his partners did not contribute financially. After terminating the partnership and starting a new business, he alleged the women continued to operate accounts and withdrew funds without permission, leaving him owed around Rs 27 lakh.

Another Suspect Arrested in Magadi Road Murder Case

BENGALURU

Police have arrested another suspect from Tamil Nadu in connection with a case where a husband shot and killed his wife under the jurisdiction of Magadi Road police station.

Investigations revealed that the husband, identified as Balamurugan, had paid ₹1.5 lakh to a Tamil Nadu resident to carry out the murder. The accused, Maulesh from Salem, reportedly accepted the supari and conducted reconnaissance near the victim's workplace and on the routes she frequently traveled. Maulesh traveled to Bengaluru and stayed with Balamurugan for three days before the crime but returned to Tamil Nadu on the day of the murder.

DCP of Bengaluru West Division, Yatish N, stated, "A murder case was registered after the man shot his wife and surrendered to police. During the investigation, we found he had accomplices and obtained a pistol illegally. Maulesh's role in planning and scouting the location is under investigation.

BASIC AMENITIES ASSURED

Yeshwantpur villages to get modern infrastructure boost

BENGALURU

MLA ST Somashekar has promised focused efforts to provide modern infrastructure to every village in Yeshwantpur constituency, aiming to develop it as a model area.

The announcement came after he inaugurated drinking water borewells at Dodda Gollarahatti, Bhutappana Temple, and Nagadevanahalli Vinayaka Layout in Nagadevanahalli ward. Speaking on the occasion, Somashekar said the government is committed to ensuring basic amenities such as roads, sewerage, drinking water supply, and streetlights reach all villages in the constituency.

He highlighted that a Rs 113 crore grant released by the state government has been distributed across all wards to accelerate development work, including roads, sewerage, and water supply. Officials have been instructed to take prompt action to implement these projects efficiently.

Local leaders, including Nagadevanahalli ward president Prakash Gowda, former president Gaurish, Chetan Gowda, Devaraj, general secretary Prakash, Vinod, and Aman Ullah, were present during the inauguration.

The MLA emphasized that these initiatives aim to improve living standards, ensure essential facilities reach every resident, and transform Yeshwantpur into a well-planned, model constituency over the coming months.

QUICK READ

Husband axes wife, hangs self in rage

BELAGAVI

A shocking family fight turned deadly in Turakarshigihalli village, Bailahongala taluk. Shivappa Kambali (50) hacked his wife Yallavva (46) to death with an axe over her trip to her hometown after her mother's passing. In a fit of fury, he then hanged himself. The couple's two sons returned to find both parents gone—one from a relative's home, the other from work. Heartbroken, they mourn their loss. Kittoor police investigated, registering a case. Last month, a similar tragedy struck Bengaluru's Magadi area.

Stove smoke kills one, six hospitalized immediately

DHARWAD

A tragic accident in Nandini Layout, Dharwad, left one person dead and six others sick after smoke from a stove used to barbecue chicken filled their home. The deceased, Bibek, and six injured Nepalese workers—Naresh, Nitesh, Dikeshi, Sudhan, Kumar, and Laxman—were all employed at Ching's Chow hotel. On Friday night, they lit a tandoori oven and went to bed. Smoke accumulated during the night, causing severe breathing problems. Neighbors discovered the victims the next morning. All six sick individuals were rushed to Dharwad District Hospital. Police have inspected the site and started investigating the incident.

Missing man found dead in local lake

HARAPANAHALLI

The body of 51-year-old N. Ramappa, missing from Arasikere village, was recovered from a lake in Gudihalli village Friday. Authorities suspect accidental drowning after Ramappa had been swimming following alcohol consumption. His disappearance prompted an intensified search involving local police, the SDRF, and skilled swimmers. After careful efforts, the submerged body was found and retrieved from the lake. A case has been registered at Arasikere police station to investigate the incident. Officials reminded residents to exercise caution near water bodies, especially when under the influence of alcohol, to prevent such tragic accidents in the future.

Cong announces statewide protests against new law

Palaniappan said Congress will continue fighting, as the law harms rural workers and weakens the employment guarantee

BELAGAVI

The Congress party has announced a series of protests across Karnataka opposing the new law related to the rural employment scheme. AICC in-charge secretary Gopinath Palaniappan said a one-day symbolic protest and hunger strike will be held in front of all Congress offices in the state on January 11.

Speaking at a press conference in Belagavi on Saturday, Palaniappan said the party will continue its fight until the new law is completely repealed. He said Congress believes the law has harmed the interests of rural workers and weakened the original purpose of the employment guarantee programme.

He explained that apart from legal action, Congress will take the issue directly to the people. From January 12 to January 29, the party will conduct mass outreach programmes at the Gram Panchayat level across the country. These programmes aim to create awareness among villagers about the impact of the new law and mobilise public support.

Palaniappan further said district-level protests will be held from January 31 to February 6. This will be followed by divisional-level protests between February 16 and February 24. During this period, demonstrations will also be organised near offices of the BJP and the Central government in Karnataka.

He said that if there were problems or gaps in the earlier NREGA programme, the government could have corrected them. "There was no need to bring in an entirely new law," he said. According to him, the new legislation has reduced job security and weakened the rights of rural workers.

Palaniappan added that the upcoming protests will follow the pattern of earlier agitations held against what he described as anti-rural policies of the Centre. He called upon party workers and the public to take part peacefully and strengthen the movement.

The Congress leader said the party remains committed to protecting the rights of rural citizens and ensuring that employment opportunities and local self-governance are not diluted by new policies.

CID Takes Over Probe Into Hubballi BJP Worker Undressing Case

HUBBALLI

Since January 2, six FIRs have been filed in Keshwapur; DySP Santhosh oversees collection, and the CID will submit a full report after thorough examination.

The CID has arrived in Hubballi to speed up the investigation into a controversial case involving the undressing of a local BJP worker. Officials say the team has been divided into three groups to carry out a detailed inquiry.

The local police will hand over all case files to the CID, led by a senior IPS officer. Under the guidance of SP Shallow, officers at the Commissioner's office are reviewing all records carefully to ensure nothing is missed.

Meanwhile, files from Keshwapur police station are being collected under DySP Santhosh. Since the incident came to light on January 2, six FIRs have been filed. These documents are being examined thoroughly by the CID, which will submit a full report to the government once the investigation concludes.

The incident reportedly began after the woman, who had recently left Congress to join the BJP, was accused of removing her name from voter records. This triggered a dispute between local BJP and Congress members. Following this, a Congress worker filed a police complaint against her. On January 5, tensions escalated when police arrested the BJP worker based on the complaint. Allegations emerged on social media claiming the woman was mistreated and stripped during custody. However, Hubballi-Dharwad Police Commissioner N. Sasikumar clarified that the woman resisted arrest violently. He said both male and female police staff were attacked while trying to control the situation. According to the commissioner, the woman removed her clothes voluntarily inside the police vehicle, and officers, with the help of locals, provided new clothing.

The CID's arrival signals a more intensive investigation into the case. Authorities are working to examine all details carefully to ensure justice is served while maintaining transparency.

Both political parties continue to watch the situation closely as the inquiry unfolds.

The Akka Pade vehicle, with trained officers, provides immediate protection, counseling, and support for women and children in danger

Akka Pade launched to protect women, children

DAVANAGERE

Davanagere district has launched a new safety initiative called Akka Pade, aimed at protecting women and children in distress. The program was inaugurated by MP Prabha Mallikarjuna near the SP office, marking its district-wide rollout.

Akka Pade operates in collaboration with the Women and Child Welfare Department and the Police Department. The initiative merges the earlier Durga Pade, a women police force, into this new unit. The personnel from Durga Pade will continue their work within Akka Pade, patrolling sensitive areas, responding to distress calls, and creating awareness in schools, colleges, markets, and neighborhoods.

The Akka Pade vehicle will have four trained women police officers and four home guard personnel. They will operate in two shifts across the district, including Davangere city. The goal is to provide immediate protection to women and children facing harassment, danger, or violence. The team will also encourage victims and families to seek help without fear, offering counseling and facilitating contact with Child Welfare Committees, women's helplines, NGOs, legal aid, and shelter homes.

SP Uma Prashant explained, "Akka Pade is both a responsive safety unit and an educational force in the society. The personnel who worked in Durga Pade will continue their efforts district-wide, now supported by trained home guards."

MP Prabha Mallikarjuna added, "Helplines 1098, 181, and 112 are available. People can call anytime, and the Akka Force will immediately respond. This initiative continues our commitment to women and child protection."

The program will also raise awareness on cybercrime, traffic rules, and gender equality. With this launch, Davangere becomes part of a larger movement to make communities safer and more responsive to the needs of women and children. The district administration and police personnel have been trained to ensure the initiative runs smoothly, promising a more secure and vigilant environment across the district.

Statewide Kannada, English typing tests start on January 12

DHARWAD

The Karnataka School Examination and Evaluation Board will conduct statewide Kannada and English language typing tests starting January 12 (Monday). English shorthand tests are scheduled from January 16, while Kannada shorthand tests will begin on January 19. State Director H.N. Gopalakrishna has instructed that all tests be carried out systematically according to official rules. Candidates in Dharwad district can obtain detailed information in person at the District Education and Training (DET) office or at the Annapurna Institute of Commerce in Navanagar. The board announced that tests will not be held on January 15, due to Makar Sankranti, and January 18, which falls on a Sunday.

For further details, candidates can contact Anilkumar Ullagaddi, President of the District Fingerprinting and Stenography Institutes Association, at 99729 52929.

The examinations aim to evaluate typing proficiency in Kannada and English and assess shorthand skills.

Siruguppa launches clean water awareness campaign

SIRUGUPPA

The Sri Kshetra Dharmasthala Rural Development Project BC Trust (R) recently organized a Clean Water Campaign at Muddatanur Government Higher Primary School in Siruguppa taluk. The initiative aims to raise awareness among students about the importance of conserving water. Speaking at the program, co-teacher Umesh emphasized that water is one of the five essential elements for human life. "Life is impossible without water. We must use this precious resource wisely and avoid wasting it," he said, urging students to adopt responsible water usage habits from today.

The event was compered by co-teacher Mudukappa, while teacher Mohammed Rafi welcomed the guests. The school's teaching staff, students, and office bearers from the Dharmasthala Rural Development Project participated actively in the campaign, engaging in discussions and activities highlighting the need for water conservation.

The program reflects ongoing efforts by the Dharmasthala project to educate rural communities on sustainable resource management and environmental responsibility. Students were encouraged to spread the message of water conservation in their households and local communities, promoting awareness that could help preserve this vital resource for future generations.

The campaign marks another step toward building environmentally conscious habits among young learners in the Siruguppa region.

Shiv Sena warns against housing illegal immigrants

BELAGAVI

Shiv Sena Karnataka State President Siddalinga Swamiji warned the government against providing houses to what he called illegal immigrants, claiming it could pose a threat to national security. He made these remarks while addressing a media conference in Belagavi.

Swamiji alleged that, in an attempt to appease Muslims, the Karnataka government is planning to provide housing under government schemes to illegal immigrants from Bangladesh and Rohingya communities. He said such actions would harm the interests of the country and its citizens. Stressing that security should be the top priority, he stated that Shiv Sena stands firmly for the nation and works mainly for the protection of Hindu interests.

Referring to recent eviction drives in Bengaluru's Kogile Badawan area, Swamiji said the government had cleared illegal encroachments but was now, according to him, taking a contradictory stand by supporting illegal immigrants. He also alleged that the state government was aligning itself with the neighbouring Kerala government led by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on this issue.

The Shiv Sena leader further claimed that Bengaluru's development has been affected due to the neglect of labourers from North Karnataka. He said these workers contribute significantly to the city but have no voice in decision making. He demanded that the government should provide proper housing to deserving local citizens instead of outsiders. Swamiji also spoke about the expansion of Shiv Sena in Karnataka. He recalled that in August last year, the Shiv Sena led by former Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde officially entered the state. As part of strengthening the party structure, district presidents have been appointed in 11 districts across Karnataka.

In Belagavi district, Shiva Nanda Hire Math of Yuva Horatgarh has been appointed as the district president, he announced. Swamiji said the party aims to expand its presence and raise public awareness on issues related to security, development and identity in the state.

Sandur officials inspect schools, review academic progress

SANDUR

A team of officials recently visited government schools in several villages, including Taranagar and Nidugurthi in Sandur taluk, to inspect school facilities and academic activities. The inspection focused on recently completed classroom construction work, with officials reviewing the quality and standards of the projects. The team also met with headmasters to discuss the school playground, learning environment, and student attendance, ensuring that both infrastructure and education standards were maintained.

The visiting team included Field Education Officer (BEO) Dr. I.R. Akki, Taluk Panchayat Executive Officer Madagina Basappa, Field Coordination Officer Sharanabasappa Karishetty, along with headmasters Timmesh, Purushottam, Jakanachari, and other school staff members. The initiative reflects the authorities' efforts to maintain quality education and safe learning spaces in government schools.

POLICE CRIME CRACKDOWN

YADGIR POLICE SOLVE 13 MAJOR CRIME CASES

YADGIR

Yadgir police have successfully solved 13 criminal cases in the past six months, seizing valuable items worth around Rs 15 lakh and arresting 10 people, officials said.

Speaking to the media at the District Police House, Superintendent of Police Prithvik Shankar praised the teams from different police stations for their efforts. "Our personnel worked hard to bring these criminals to justice and recover stolen property," he said. One notable arrest was Mahadeva Dayavannora from Allur (B) village in Chittapur taluk. He was accused of stealing five motorcycles worth Rs 1.70 lakh from Yadgir Nagar and Bengaluru's Konanakunte police stations. Another accused, Ashoka Mushya, was arrested for a house robbery, and police recovered Rs 1.49 lakh in cash along with gold items. Other arrests included Mahesh Moga from Andhra Pradesh, from whom Rs 4.80 lakh in cash and gold worth several grams were recovered. Additional arrests included Anjaneya from Raichur, Shivappa Bevinahalli, Prashansha, and Dasharatha Kattimani, who were involved in thefts, extortion, and stealing livestock. Police also recovered silver items worth over a lakh.

Additional SP Dharnesha, DSPs Javid Inandara and Suresh Naik, and CPI Sunil Mulimani were present during the briefing. SP Shankar noted that officers and staff, including PSIs Mahbub, Manjanagowda, and others, played key roles in solving these cases. All will be given letters of appreciation by the department.

On another note, the SP urged residents to follow traffic rules. The district recorded 166 road accidents in 2025, up from 157 in 2024, with 85 bikers losing their lives. Authorities reminded riders to wear helmets, avoid overcrowding, and refrain from using mobile phones while driving.

QUICK READ

Elephant triggers long traffic jam at Charmadi Ghat

CHIKKAMAGALURU

A lone wild elephant was spotted near the second and third hairpin bends of Charmadi Ghat, causing panic among travellers and leading to a major traffic disruption. On Friday night (January 9), the elephant reportedly uprooted a tree and stood on the road, resulting in a traffic jam stretching nearly two kilometres on the Chikkamagaluru–Mangaluru stretch.

The congestion lasted for over an hour, leaving commuters stranded. With no mobile network available in the area, tourists struggled to inform the Forest Department. Some motorists were forced to turn back due to safety concerns.

Following the incident, Forest Department officials issued a warning urging travellers to exercise extreme caution while using this route at night.

Saraswathi Ratha marks opening of 8th M'luru Lit Fest

MANGALURU

The 8th edition of the Mangaluru Lit Fest was inaugurated in a visually striking manner on Friday with the pulling of the Saraswathi Ratha, a book-filled chariot symbolising learning and culture. In his inaugural address, Shatavadhani R. Ganesh expressed concern over the declining depth of language education. He said universities and teachers shared responsibility for reducing classical literary works to summaries, thereby weakening students' engagement with language and values. "Literature endures when it explores the human mind beyond immediate problems," he observed. The opening session included a dialogue on "Exploring Values Through Literature" between Ganesh and Ajakkala Girish Bhat, focusing on emotion (bhava) as central to literary sensitivity.

Cong launches fight against centre over MGNREGA

Congress Minister Madhu Bangarappa accuses the Centre of dismantling MGNREGA and announces statewide protests from the gram panchayat level

SHIVAMOGGA

Minister Madhu Bangarappa on Friday accused the Central government of effectively scrapping the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), warning that the Congress would launch a grassroots-level agitation against what he described as a "black law." Addressing a press conference, he said the Centre was not merely changing the name of the scheme but dismantling it altogether, thereby undermining rural employment and local self-governance.

Bangarappa alleged that the BJP was systematically attempting to erase Mahatma Gandhi's legacy. "Gandhiji dreamt of inclusive rural development, but that vision is being crushed," he said. He charged that while Nathuram Godse killed Gandhi once, the BJP was "killing Gandhi every day" by weakening welfare programmes associated with his ideals. Emphasising pluralism, he added that India's heart embraced Ram, Krishna and Rahim alike.

He said MGNREGA had ensured employment for rural workers, supported the poor and empowered gram panchayats. With the new framework, he claimed, the right to work was being taken away and panchayat projects would now depend entirely on Central decisions. Only workers in notified villages would benefit, leaving others unemployed, with no guarantee of continuous work or timely wages.

Bangarappa criticised the revised wage-sharing formula, under which the Centre would bear 60% and states 40% of costs. He said many states, including Karnataka, were already facing delays and shortfalls in Central funds, making the scheme an added financial burden. Despite repeated appeals, he alleged, the Centre had adopted a step-motherly attitude.

He warned that the proposed "G-RAMJI" scheme would increase unemployment, weaken minimum wage protections, reduce women's participation and place additional pressure on Dalit, Adivasi and poor families, while reducing panchayats to mere implementing agencies.

Demanding the complete withdrawal of the "Viksit Bharat G-RAMJI Act," he called for continuation of MGNREGA, restoration of the right to work, strengthening of gram panchayats and increasing guaranteed workdays to 150.

Otherwise, he said, Congress would intensify protests from the gram panchayat level. Responding to questions, he said issues related to Kannada schools in Kerala, exam paper leaks, school grant policies and rising POCSO cases were being addressed by the government.

Cow killed in land bomb blast case: Three arrested

Three men were arrested in Ramanagara after a land bomb planted for hunting exploded in a cow's mouth, killing the animal.

RAMANAGARA

Police have arrested three persons in connection with a shocking incident in which a cow suffered fatal injuries after a land bomb exploded in its mouth. The accused had allegedly planted the explosive device to hunt wild boars in a forested area.

The arrested individuals have been identified as Krishnamurthy (45), Shivakumar (23) and Shivanappa (46). The incident occurred on January 3 near Alanath village in Kanakapura taluk. According to police, farmer Shivane Gowda had let his cow out to graze when it accidentally came into contact with a land bomb planted in the open. The explosive went off after getting lodged in the animal's mouth, causing severe and gruesome injuries.

The cow reportedly writhed in pain for two days before succumbing to its injuries. Distressed by the incident, the farmer lodged a complaint at the Kodihalli Police Station, following which a case was registered and an investigation launched.

Taking the matter seriously, the Kodihalli police conducted a focused operation and traced the suspects involved in illegally placing land bombs for hunting wild animals. During the arrests, police also seized two live land bombs from the accused, highlighting the continued use of dangerous and banned hunting methods in rural areas. Officials said the use of land bombs poses a grave threat not only to wildlife but also to domestic animals and humans who may unknowingly come into contact with them. The case has been registered at the Kodihalli Police Station, and further investigation is underway to determine whether the accused were involved in similar incidents earlier.

The incident has triggered outrage among local residents and animal welfare groups, who have demanded strict action against those using explosives for hunting. Authorities have reiterated that placing land bombs is a serious criminal offence and warned of stringent legal consequences for such acts.

Police raid illegal sand mining site, case registered

BELTHANGADY

The Belthangady police have conducted a raid on an illegal sand mining site and registered a case against those involved in unlawfully extracting sand without paying royalty to the government. The operation was carried out on the morning of January 8 following specific intelligence inputs. Police raided a location known as Gandibagilu in Kadirudyavara village, where sand was being illegally extracted from the banks of the Netravati river using a Hitachi excavator. The sand was reportedly being loaded into a tipper lorry and transported for sale, causing significant loss to the government exchequer. During the raid, the driver of the tipper lorry abandoned the vehicle at the spot and fled. Police detained the Hitachi operator, who identified himself as Mohammed Shameeruddin, a resident of Charmadi in Kakkinje village of Belthangady taluk. He also revealed that the absconding tipper driver was H. Hanif, also a resident of Charmadi. Preliminary investigation revealed that the accused had been clandestinely carrying out sand theft from the same location for a considerable period, deliberately evading the notice of authorities and depriving the state of revenue. Police seized a tipper lorry bearing registration number KA-41-C-0057, valued at approximately ₹3.5 lakh, along with a DOOSAN Hitachi-150 excavator worth around ₹2.5 lakh. Both vehicles were allegedly used in the illegal activity. A case has been registered at the Belthangady Police Station against Mohammed Shameeruddin and H. Hanif under relevant sections of the law, including Section 303(2), (3) and (5).

One-day Salafi Conference on January 11

ULLAL

A one-day Salafi conference along with the second Sanad distribution ceremony will be held on January 11 at Abrar Nagar, Talapady, under the auspices of the South Karnataka Salafi Movement, Talapady unit, and Masjidul Abrar. Addressing a press conference, S.K.S.M. Youth Secretary Shihab Talapady said the programme will begin at 9.30 am on Sunday and continue until 10.00 pm. The event aims to promote religious education, social awareness and community engagement. As part of the programme, a women's conference of students from the Darul Uloom Women's College, which functions under the South Karnataka Salafi Movement, will be held at 9.30 am. This will be followed by the second Sanad (certificate) distribution ceremony. After the Asr prayer, a Dawah conference will be organised, while the concluding ceremony will be held in the evening. Several prominent religious scholars and speakers are expected to participate in the conference, including Sheikh Sultan Saeed Bilal, Maulvi Ansar Nammund, and Maulvi Muneer Madani, along with other distinguished guests. They will address various religious and social issues during the sessions. The organisers said the conference is expected to draw a large gathering of participants from across the region and will provide a platform for learning, interaction and spiritual enrichment. The press meet was attended by Abrar Masjid Vice-President Hammad (K.C. Road), Secretary Hussain alias Aisan, committee member Ibrahim Madur, and Abubakkar Kolangare, among others.

Farmers catch groundnut thief, hand him over to police

GADAG

Farmers caught a man allegedly involved in groundnut crop theft and handed him over to the police after tying him to a pole, following an incident on the outskirts of Gadag near Sarvajna Circle. The accused has been identified as Chidanand Chalawadi (30), a resident of Gangavathi in Koppal district. He was caught red-handed while stealing groundnut crops from farmers' fields along the Hombal Road. Alert farmers apprehended him and later informed the police. According to farmers, the thefts were being carried out by a gang of four to five members who usually operate late at night or in the early hours before dawn. The gang allegedly travels in a "tum-tum" vehicle and enters agricultural fields carrying weapons and chilli powder to threaten or overpower farmers during the thefts. For the past week, several farmers in the area had reported large-scale theft of freshly harvested green groundnuts. On Friday, farmers noticed suspicious movement near the railway track along Hombal Road. They immediately alerted other farmers by phone, and a group rushed to the spot. As the farmers gathered, three to four members of the gang managed to escape. However, one suspect was caught along with a sack of stolen green groundnuts. Angry farmers tied him to a pole at Sarvajna Circle and hung the stolen produce around his neck as a mark of protest, expressing their frustration over repeated thefts. They later handed the accused over to the police. Police suspect that stealing and selling green groundnuts may have been the gang's regular activity. The accused has been taken into custody, and further investigation is underway to trace the absconding members of the group.

4th annual Lava-Kusha Kambala festival inaugurated

KONAJE

The 4th annual Lava-Kusha Kambala Festival was inaugurated in Naringana, highlighting the cultural and sporting heritage of coastal Karnataka. Dr. M. Mohan Alva, president of the Alvas Group of Educational Institutions, emphasized that Kambala is not just a folk sport but the lifeline of the coastal region, deeply intertwined with the region's agricultural traditions and centuries-old cultural practices, including Yakshagana, deity worship, and naga rituals. He urged the preservation and promotion of such traditions, which unite communities and reinforce the region's identity. Speaking at the event, Sri Gurudevananda Swamiji of Uduyur noted the spiritual essence of Kambala, pointing out its connection with farming culture and highlighting the importance of promoting the Tulu language and cultural heritage. Senior Kambala analyst Gunapal Kadamba described the sport as a community celebration transcending caste and religious barriers, calling for collective encouragement and support. The festival was presided over by U.T. Khader, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly and president of the Naringana Kambala Committee. Chief guests included Mittakodi Venkappa Kajav, religious leaders such as Peter Saldana of Naringana Bol Church, temple priests Ganesh Bhat and Vasu Moolya, and local dignitaries including Chandrashekhara Poonja, Sadashiva Ullal, and Pramod Kumar Rai, among others. Former district panchayat members, village panchayat heads, and community leaders attended, reflecting the wide local engagement. Prashanth Kajav, the festival committee's working president, welcomed the gathering and outlined the event schedule, while journalist Satish Pundikai served as the master of ceremonies. The festival featured Kambala races, traditional rituals, and cultural programs, celebrating the coastal heritage while fostering community bonding and promoting local traditions and sportsmanship.

Preserve Bary heritage beyond language: Prof Khan

MANGALURU

Stressing that Bary is not merely a language but a rich cultural tradition rooted in folklore and history, Karnataka University Vice-Chancellor Prof. A.M. Khan on Saturday called for sustained efforts to preserve and promote Bary heritage beyond its linguistic and commercial dimensions.

He was speaking after inaugurating the Bary Research and Development Centre at a programme held at the Mangala Hall of Hotel Srinivas here. Prof. Khan said the Bary community possessed a distinct language, culture and social practices, marked by regional variations. "Bary identity should not be confined to language or trade alone. Its traditions, values and contributions must be highlighted and carried forward," he said.

NATIONAL SCHOOL RECOGNITION

Govt higher primary school selected for national recognition

CHIKKAMAGALURU

The Government Higher Primary School at Hangaravalli in Chikkamagaluru taluk has been selected at the national level for its outstanding performance as a model school. The selection has been made for the National Conference on Successful School Leadership for government and aided schools, organised by the National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA). Held in line with the vision of Viksit Bharat–2047, the conference saw nominations from over 300 schools across the country, out of which only 55 model schools were shortlisted. Karnataka secured two selections, including the Hangaravalli school and a government high school from Siddapur taluk in Uttara Kannada district. The headmaster of Hangaravalli school will present the institution's success story during a 15-minute presentation at the conference. Established in 1951 under the name Koolimath, the 75-year-old school once catered to students from several surrounding villages. However, due to the rise of private convent schools, enrolment dropped drastically, reaching just 13 students by 2018, pushing the school to the brink of closure. Determined to revive it, alumni and villagers formed the Shri Uddandeshwara Education Service Trust. With government permission, LKG and UKG classes were introduced, followed by bilingual instruction. Private teachers were recruited through interviews and paid by the trust, while donor support helped arrange two buses for student transport.

Cong announces statewide protest against G-RAM-G Bill

Congress launches statewide protest against Centre's G-RAM-G Bill, opposing MGNREGA renaming and defending farmers' and workers' rights

BENGALURU RURAL

The Congress party has announced a statewide agitation against the Union government over the renaming and restructuring of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGA) as "G-RAM-G." The announcement was made at a press conference held at a private hotel near Kannamangala Gate in Devanahalli taluk, chaired by AICC district in-charge Abhishek Dutt and district in-charge minister K.H. Muniyappa. Addressing the media, AICC Secretary and Bengaluru in-charge Abhishek Dutt said the BJP's only achievement had been renaming welfare schemes launched by the Congress. He alleged that the Centre was weakening pro-poor programmes and asserted that the Congress would launch an intense statewide protest against the implementation of the G-RAM-G Bill. Protecting the interests of farmers and workers, he said, remained the Congress party's responsibility, recalling that when the Congress was in power at the Centre, farm loans worth nearly ₹72,000 crore were waived off to support small and marginal farmers.

Dutt accused the BJP of indulging in divisive politics, spreading hatred and social unrest, and burdening states by mandating them to bear 40% of scheme costs. He warned that centralised decision-making would adversely affect rural development and delay essential funds and works. Minister K.H. Muniyappa said the Karnataka Cabinet had decided to initiate a legal fight against the renaming of MGNREGA as "VB G-RAM-G," calling it an insult to Mahatma Gandhi.

He said the scheme, introduced during the Congress regime, had ensured employment for landless labourers and rural poor through works such as bund construction, desilting of tanks and water conservation structures. Muniyappa announced a 5-km padayatra involving nearly 10,000 people to demand withdrawal of the Bill, stating that the movement would begin in Bengaluru Rural district and continue until the Centre relented. He asserted that the Congress would never tolerate any attempt to erase Mahatma Gandhi's name and legacy.

Several Congress leaders and party functionaries were present at the press conference.

Judge stresses coordination between state, legal services

CHITRADURGA

Emphasising the need for stronger coordination between the State and District Legal Services Authorities, Karnataka High Court judge and Chairperson of the Karnataka State Legal Services Authority, Justice Anu Shivaramann, said that timely justice must reach the weak and marginalised sections of society.

She was speaking after inaugurating a one-day state-level workshop organised jointly by the State Legal Services Authority and the Chitradurga District Legal Services Authority at the Zilla Panchayat auditorium on Saturday. The workshop brought together presidents and secretaries of Legal Services Authorities from all districts of Karnataka.

Justice Shivaramann noted that the National Legal Services Authority was established under the 1985 Act with the objective of ensuring justice for even the most disadvantaged individuals. While national-level schemes are formulated centrally, their effective implementation at the state and district levels rests with Legal Services Authorities. This responsibility, she said, must be discharged not mechanically or as a mere formality, but with empathy and a strong sense of social responsibility.

Highlighting Karnataka's vast geographical and social diversity, she said each district faces unique challenges, which district authorities must understand and address. Unlike routine judicial duties, Legal Services Authorities play a crucial role in supervising administrative coordination with the legislature and executive, and in taking justice directly to people's doorsteps, thereby fulfilling the spirit of the Constitution.

She urged district judges and senior judges—appointed as presidents and secretaries of District Legal Services Authorities—to work unitedly, setting aside differences that may arise during regular judicial functions. The primary focus, she stressed, should be ensuring justice for the helpless and oppressed.

Justice Shivaramann also expressed concern over delays in justice and compensation. She said legal aid is a right of the underprivileged and its delivery is the Authority's duty. Court-ordered compensation must be implemented without delay. She revealed that around ₹6 crore in fees and ₹21 crore in victim compensation payments remain pending at the state level, calling for time-bound disposal of bills, financial management and clearance of pending files.

'Sauhardha Bharata' book launched, spreads message of harmony

CHITRADURGA

The book Sauhardha Bharata by Nadoja Baraguru Ramachandrappa, which highlights personalities who have promoted harmony and rejected hatred in India, was launched on Saturday at the Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Auditorium. Poet Dr. Lokesh Agasanakatte, speaking at the event, said the book's primary aim is to convey the message of peace and harmony to the public. He emphasized that in today's climate of intolerance, hatred, and violence, cultivating a proactive and conscious mindset is essential. Ramachandrappa's work encourages universal human values and fosters an inclusive way of thinking, stressing tolerance, equality, and brotherhood. The author underscores that freedom and equality are meaningful only when mutual respect and harmony exist, and society must embrace these principles for a balanced and progressive life.

Additional dignitaries, including Deputy Commissioner B.T. Kumaraswamy and Principal of Government College of Arts Dr. J. Kariyappa Malige, highlighted the importance of truth, non-violence, and human values in contemporary society. They noted that the book is especially relevant in today's times, where social divisions, intolerance, and erosion of ethical values are increasing.

The launch also involved contributions from academics, journalists, and members of cultural organizations, who praised Ramachandrappa's lifelong commitment to nurturing humanistic values and building a socially harmonious India.

The event encouraged readers to study his writings and take steps toward fostering coexistence, community bonding, and compassion in daily life, aligning with the book's vision of a "Harmony India."

Treasure weighing about 1 kg unearthed while digging house

GADAG

In a remarkable incident, around one kilogram of gold ornaments was discovered while digging the foundation for a new house in the historically significant village of Lakkundi in Gadag district. The find was reported from Ward No. 4 of Lakkundi, where Gangavva Basavaraj Ritti was undertaking construction work at her residence. According to officials, the gold artefacts came to light during excavation for the foundation. Soon after the discovery was reported, members of the Lakkundi Development Authority, officials from the Archaeology Department, and subject experts visited the site and carried out a preliminary inspection. Authorities stated that the exact period and historical ownership of the ornaments can be determined only after detailed scientific analysis and examination. Siddhu Patil, a member of the Lakkundi Development Authority, said that the artefacts would be sent for proper testing to ascertain whether they belong to a specific historical era. Lakkundi is known for its rich heritage dating back to the Kalyana Chalukya period, with renowned temples, stepwells, inscriptions, and hidden archaeological treasures. The discovery has generated significant excitement and curiosity among local residents, especially as archaeological surveys and conservation efforts have been ongoing in the region. Historically, Lakkundi is believed to have been an important centre for minting gold coins during the Chalukya era.

Vatal Nagaraj protests against Malayalam Language Bill

RAMANAGARA

Senior Kannada activist Vatal Nagaraj staged a protest at Ijoor Circle in the city on Saturday, opposing the Kerala government's move to make Malayalam a compulsory subject in Kannada-medium schools. Addressing reporters during the protest, Nagaraj alleged that Kannadigas in Kerala are facing systematic oppression and injustice.

He strongly criticised the decision to impose Malayalam on Kannada schools, calling it unacceptable and an attack on the linguistic rights of Kannadigas. Referring specifically to Kasaragod district, he said it is predominantly inhabited by Kannadigas, yet their language and cultural identity are being consistently ignored. The government, he asserted, must urgently intervene to stop such discrimination and protect the rights of Kannada-speaking people. Nagaraj welcomed Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's recent letter to the Kerala government on the issue, describing it as a positive step. However, he stressed that mere correspondence was not enough and demanded a permanent and concrete solution. He urged the Chief Minister to convene a special session of the Karnataka legislature to discuss the issue in detail and adopt a strong resolution.

Taking a more aggressive stance, Nagaraj reiterated his long-standing demand that Kasaragod be merged with Karnataka, citing linguistic and cultural affinity. He also called for the formation of an all-party delegation to meet the President of India and present the concerns of Kannadigas living in Kerala. Warning of intensified agitation, he said that if corrective steps were not taken, activists would lay siege to Kasaragod and even protest in front of the Raj Bhavan.

SANITATION WORKERS' SERVICE COMMENDABLE: K. SHESHADRI

RAMANAGARA

The tireless service of sanitation workers, who leave their homes early in the morning and clean city streets regardless of cold, rain or harsh weather, is truly commendable, said Municipal Council President K. Sheshadri (Shashi). He was speaking on Saturday at a programme held in the municipal council hall, where essential winter materials were distributed to sanitation workers. Sheshadri said the contribution of civic workers who clean the city in the early hours, undeterred by rain, wind or cold, can never be forgotten, and stressed that they must receive all benefits they are entitled to. Despite severe cold, sanitation workers begin their work as early as 5 a.m. to ensure the city remains clean. Acknowledging their dedication, he appreciated trader Srinivas for donating blankets, caps and scarves to support the workers during winter. At present, the municipality has around 160 sanitation workers. Of these, 60 workers have already received winter essentials through Srinivas' contribution. With the intention of ensuring equality and avoiding discrimination, Sheshadri said arrangements are being made collectively to provide similar support to the remaining 100 workers as well. He noted that sanitation workers play a vital role in safeguarding public health by maintaining cleanliness across the city. Through this initiative, the municipality and donor Srinivas aim to convey the message that the civic body stands firmly with its sanitation workforce.

VB G RAM G

VB G-Ram-G ends corruption: MP K. Sudhakar

DEVANAHALLI

The VB Ji Ram-G scheme, introduced as a reformed version of the earlier MGNREGA program, has significantly curbed corruption while promoting transparency in rural employment, stated MP Dr. K. Sudhakar. Speaking at a press conference at Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Bhavan in Devanahalli, he emphasized that the NDA government, under PM Narendra Modi, revamped the 2005 MGNREGA framework to align with the "Viksit Bharat 2047" vision, ensuring rural workers receive their due benefits on time. Dr. Sudhakar highlighted that during the UPA regime, political interference was rampant: local MLAs and party workers controlled fund allocation, often registering names of 50 people when only 10 worked. CAG reports indicated 40–50% of funds were misused, wages were delayed 2–4 months, and bogus bills caused large-scale financial loss. In contrast, the VB Ji Ram-G scheme introduces transparency through geo-tags, satellite imagery, and strengthened Panchayat oversight, reducing opportunities for fraud.

He further detailed improvements in rural development metrics: under NDA, total expenditure increased from ₹2.13 lakh crore to ₹8.53 lakh crore, employment days generated rose from 1,660 crore to 3,210 crore, and completed works increased from 153 lakh annually to 862 lakh. Asset creation jumped from 12% to 62.95%, and mandated workdays for Scheduled Castes and tribal regions were increased to 150 days.

Dr. Sudhakar criticized Congress for politicizing the scheme's renaming, stating that while the opposition focuses on the program's title, the government's priority is empowering local institutions and delivering justice to rural workers. He reiterated that the scheme strengthens grassroots democracy and aligns with Mahatma Gandhi's vision of self-reliant villages, providing timely wages, promoting water conservation, agricultural productivity, and asset creation.

PUBLIC NOTICE

My client by name Sri. Manchegowda son of Sri. Shivalingegowda, residing at: Anigere Village, Malur Hobli, Channapatna Taluk and Bangalore South District, has lost Original Registered Partition Deed, dated: 26-02-2020, executed between Sri. Manchegowda and his family members, which is duly registered as Document No. CAN-1-09633/2019-20, CD. No. CAND-592, Book-1, Registered on 26-02-2020 and Registered at Sub Register Office, Channapatna, while Xerox at Channapatna on 01-01 2025. Hence, if anyone found the said document, please intimate the same or handover the same to me or my client.

Contact Advocate Address:

Rajini. M.S., B.A., LL.B., Advocate, 1st Floor, Society Building, PLD Bank Road, Opposite Old Bus Stop, Ramanagara Town-562159, Mob: 8884242935.

CH CLASSIFIEDS

To place a classified ad contact: **080-41209042**

KARNATAKA PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT.
Tumkur Division, Karnataka, Telephone : 0816 2272479.

No.EE/KPWD/Tmk/AE-2/T.No.42/2025-26/ Dt. 05-01-2026

Short term Invitation For Tender (IFT) KW-4 E-TENDER NOTIFICATION.

On behalf of Government of Karnataka tenders are invited in Two cover system for Class-2 & 1 Contractors registered in PWD for 16 work under 4059 CMIDP Head of account in the jurisidiction of Tumkur Division through KPPP-Portal **(https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in).** The dates are published as below.

(Maximum amount put to Tender **Rs.757.18** and Minimum amount put to Tender **Rs.207.72 Lakhs,** Maximun EMD Amount **Rs. 11,35,771/-** and Minimum EMD Amount **Rs. 3,11,592/-**)

1	Last date for tender information enquiries	**19-01-2026: 17-30**
2	Last date for submission of tender.	**20-01-2026 : 16-00**
3	Date of opening the Technical bid.	**21-01-2026: 16-30**
4	Date of opening the Financial bid.	**22-01-2026: 17-00**

Note: Turnover Certificate without UDI Number will not be considered. Here after any changes with reference to this Notification will be Notified in E-Portal Only

Sd/- Executive Engineer
DIPR/TUM/RO-226/25-26/Oysters P.W.D Division, Tumkur

BENGALURU WEST CITY CORPORATION
Office of the Executive Engineer, Special Division,
RR Nagara Zone-1, No.301, 2nd Floor, Near BEML Complex, 3rd Stage, BEML Layout,
Rajarajeshwarinagara, Bengaluru-560098.

No:BBMP/EE/S.D/RRNZ-1/TEND/01/2025-26 Date: 07-01-2026

SHORT TERM TENDER NOTIFICATION
(TWO COVER SYSTEM)

(Through **GOK** KPP Portal **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in** only)
The Executive Engineer, Special Division, R R Nagara Zone-1, invites tenders from eligible bidders for the work detailed in table below.

Sl No.	Name of the works
1.	Civil Maintenance in Rajarajeshwarinagara Constituency Parks **Estimate Amount: ₹.50.00 Lakhs, EMD: ₹.1,00,000/-**
2.	Civil Maintenance in Yashavanthapura Constituency Parks **Estimate Amount: ₹.50.00 Lakhs, EMD: ₹.1,00,000/-**
3.	Construction and Renovation of Compound Wall at Kariobanahalli, Burial Ground in **Ward No.40** at Yashavanthapura **Estimate Amount: ₹.6.65 Lakhs, EMD: ₹.13,300/-**

Calendar of Events : (1) downloading the Tender Documents on **12-01-2026** onwards (2) Last date & Time for Tender Queries is **14-01-2026** up to **3:00** pm. (3) Last Date for Submission of Tender Document is **22-01-2026** up to **5:30** pm. (4) Opening of Technical Bid is on **23-01-2026** at **5:30** pm. (5) Opening of Financial Bid will be intimated to the **Technically Qualified Bidders.** In the Event of the Specified Date of Tender Opening being declared a Holiday for the Employer, the Tenders will be opened at the Appointed Time and Location on the Next Working Day.

Sd/- Executive Engineer,
Special Division, Rajarajeshwarinagara Zone-1

QUICK READ

Franco case survivor Nun claims isolation, intimidation

Thiruvananthapuram

A nun who survived alleged sexual abuse by a Bishop has spoken out about the ordeal she has endured over the past eight years, alleging isolation, intimidation and institutional silence. Speaking to Asianet TV, Sister Ranit said her present life feels as though her hands and legs are tied, as she continues to face social ostracism and uncertainty even years after the complaint was made. Recalling the aftermath of raising the abuse allegation within the Church, the survivor said she was immediately isolated.

Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue inaugurated

New Delhi

The Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue was inaugurated at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi, by Union Minister of Youth Affairs & Sports and Labour & Employment, Mansukh Mandaviya, along with National Security Advisor Ajit Doval, marking a significant step towards empowering India's youth to actively participate in nation-building. Minister of State for Youth Affairs and Sports, Raksha Nikhil Khadse, and Youth Affairs Secretary Pallavi Jain Govil were also present at the event. Addressing the young participants, Mansukh Mandaviya highlighted the massive scale and rigorous selection process of the initiative. He said, Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue saw participation from nearly 50 lakh youth across the country.

10 lakh students to benefit under TN's laptop scheme

Chennai

The Tamil Nadu government's ambitious free laptop distribution scheme for college students has gathered pace, with the first phase set to be completed by the end of February. The initial rollout aims to benefit 10 lakh students across the State, and nearly two lakh laptops have already reached eligible beneficiaries, officials said. The programme, implemented through the Electronics Corporation of Tamil Nadu (ELCOT), is part of the State's wider push to bridge the digital divide and improve access to technology in higher education.

Yogi Adityanath Offers Prayers at Ganga During Magh Mela

Yogi Adityanath visited Prayagraj during Magh Mela 2026, offering prayers and reviewing preparations for major bathing festivals.

PRAYAGRAJ

Yogi Adityanath, the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, on Saturday offered prayers and performed rituals at the holy Ganga river in Prayagraj during his visit to the Magh Mela 2026. The visit was part of his review of arrangements for the upcoming major bathing rituals that are expected to draw lakhs of devotees from across the country.

The Chief Minister arrived in Prayagraj to assess preparations for the forthcoming 'Snan Parv' at the Magh Mela, a significant religious event held annually on the banks of the Ganga. During his visit, he participated in Ganga Puja, offering prayers for the well-being and prosperity of the state and the nation. He was also scheduled to take part in several religious programmes organised at Sattu Baba's pandal within the Magh Mela area.

According to officials, CM Adityanath will hold a detailed review meeting with administrative and police officials to evaluate arrangements for the major bathing festivals, including Makar Sankranti, Mauni Amavasya, and Basant Panchami. These auspicious bathing days are expected to witness a massive influx of pilgrims and saints, making crowd management, sanitation, security, and health services a top priority.

After taking a holy dip in the Ganga and performing puja, the Chief Minister was scheduled to participate in the manifestation ceremony of Jagadguru Ramanandacharya at Sattu Baba's camp. He was expected to arrive at the pandal shortly, where sadhus and seers from different akharas had already begun gathering for religious discourses and ceremonies.

An official statement said that CM Adityanath would also interact with sants and religious leaders present at the Magh Mela site. In addition, he will attend a special programme organised on the occasion of the 726th birth anniversary of Ramanandacharya, highlighting the spiritual and cultural significance of the Bhakti movement.

TN strengthens ecological protection

CHENNAI

In a major push to strengthen ecological protection and climate resilience, the Tamil Nadu government has notified 100 forest blocks as Reserved Forests (RF) over the last four years, significantly expanding the state's legally protected green cover. The move, implemented between 2021 and 2025, reflects a sustained policy focus on conserving biodiversity-rich landscapes, securing wildlife corridors and safeguarding critical ecosystems against long-term environmental pressures.

According to official data released by Forest Minister R.S. Raja Kannappan, the latest notifications have added around 135 sq km to the state's reserved forest area, increasing it from 26,450 sq km to 26,585 sq km. The newly notified forest blocks span 13,494.95 hectares and are spread across 10 districts -- Dindigul, Dharmapuri, Madurai, Kallakurichi, Theni, Sivaganga, Namakkal, the Nilgiris, Salem and Tenkasi.

Among the additions, the Highways Forest Block in Theni district, covering 2,836.33 hectares, is the single largest.

Officials said its notification underlines the government's emphasis on protecting ecologically sensitive landscapes that play a vital role in maintaining habitat continuity and climate stability. In the Nilgiris, forest officials highlighted the importance of the newly notified blocks in strengthening wildlife connectivity.

Vengatesh Prabhu, Divisional Forest Officer (Gudalur), said the Cherumulli forest block borders the Mudumalai Tiger Reserve, while the Yellamalai forest block lies close to the Mukurthi National Park.

A speeding Audi car ploughed into pedestrians in Jaipur, killing one person and injuring fourteen others.

One Killed, 14 Injured After Speeding Audi Rams Pedestrians

JAIPUR

One pedestrian lost his life, and 14 others sustained injuries after a speeding Audi car rammed into them in Rajasthan's Jaipur, police said on Saturday. The incident took place when the luxury car allegedly went out of control. The vehicle first struck a divider and then crashed into roadside stalls and food carts over a stretch of nearly 30 metres before hitting a tree and coming to a halt, the police officials said.

Several parked vehicles were also damaged in the accident. Officials said the impact was so severe that the Audi was left completely mangled.

The speeding car mowed down 13 pedestrians, all of whom were rushed to a nearby hospital for treatment.

Of the injured, four were initially stated to be in a critical condition and were referred to Sawai Man Singh (SMS) Hospital for advanced care.

DCP West Rajarshi Verma said, An Audi car was coming from Vande Mataram Circle towards Dharvas Circle and was overspeeding. It hit some roadside stalls, causing one casualty. At least 12 people are still in the hospital for treatment. All the injured are out of danger, and none are in critical condition. Besides the driver, three other people were in the car. One has been detained, and the remaining three have been identified and will be apprehended soon.

He added that preliminary information points to overspeeding as the main cause of the accident, though the possibility of drinking and driving is still being verified.

One of the injured, identified as Ramesh Bairwa, a resident of Bhilwara, succumbed to his injuries during treatment. Officials said there were four people inside the car, all of whom were allegedly under the influence of alcohol at the time of the crash.

While one person has been arrested, the remaining three fled the scene soon after the incident. The driver of the Audi has been identified as Dinesh Ranwan. The vehicle involved in the accident has been seized, and police teams are conducting searches to trace and arrest the remaining accused.

DRONE ARMS SEIZED

Arms consignment dropped by Pak drone near J&K

JAMMU

Security forces on Saturday recovered an arm/ammunition consignment dropped by a Pakistani drone near the international border (IB) in J&K's Samba district, officials said.

The security forces foiled an attempt by terror handlers operating from across the IB, who dropped an arms consignment for the terrorists through a Pakistani drone.

Security forces recovered an arm/ammunition consignment dropped by a Pakistani drone in the Regal forward area near the IB in Samba district. The recovery was made during routine surveillance and area domination in the forward belt close to the IB. Alert troops detected suspicious material in the Regal area and subsequently conducted a thorough search operation, leading to the recovery of the consignment, the statement said.

The recovered arms/ammunition include two pistols, three magazines, 16 rounds of ammunition, and one grenade. Security forces believe the consignment was intended to be used for disruptive activities in the border region. The timely detection and recovery of the arms prevented a potential security threat in the area. The use of drones for cross-border dropping of weapons and contraband has emerged as a recurring challenge for security forces along the IB and the line of control (LoC) in J&K, it said.

A case has been registered, and further investigation has been launched to trace the intended recipients and establish the exact route and launch point of the drone.

Security has been further strengthened in the border area, and additional surveillance measures have been put in place to counter such attempts. Effective ground patrolling and technical monitoring remain crucial in thwarting drone-based infiltration and smuggling activities in the region, officials said.

Cold spell persists in Bengal as temperatures dips

KOLKATA

The ongoing cold spell in West Bengal intensified on Saturday as temperatures dropped further in Kolkata and several districts, and the chill is expected to continue for the next few days. According to the Regional Meteorological Centre in Kolkata's Alipore, the temperature dropped as cold northerly winds are freely entering the state, resulting in biting cold. There is also a significant presence of fog at several places.

The minimum temperature in the city rose slightly to 12.1 degrees Celsius. However, the mercury dropped again on Saturday, recording 11.5 degrees Celsius, which is 2.5 degrees below normal. The maximum temperature in the city was 22.6 degrees Celsius, which is 2.1 degrees below normal.

A fog warning has been issued across the state. Light to moderate fog is expected in the districts of South Bengal during the morning hours, reducing visibility to 999-200 metres. Some districts may experience fog until midday. A dense fog warning has been issued for north Bengal. Due to fog, visibility in Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar, and North Dinajpur districts may drop to 199-50 metres. Dry weather will prevail across the state.

Due to the current cold spell, temperatures in several southern districts are even lower than those of north Bengal. Except for Darjeeling, the cold in the south is surpassing that of all other cities in the north. On Saturday, the minimum temperature in Darjeeling was 3.2 degrees Celsius, the lowest in the state.

Pakistan-Linked Syndicates Behind Rising Narcotics Trade

JAMMU

Investigating agencies have intensified efforts as narcotics cases surge in Jammu and Kashmir, exposing Pakistan-linked syndicates and new tactics.

Investigating agencies have stepped up surveillance and enforcement as narcotics-related cases continue to rise in Jammu and Kashmir, with officials pointing to syndicates operating from Pakistan as the primary suppliers. According to officials, these networks are exploiting vulnerabilities along border areas to push drugs into the Union Territory, posing serious security and social challenges.

Investigations have revealed that, in recent times, narcotics are being smuggled into neighbouring Punjab and then transported by road into Jammu and Kashmir. The year 2025 witnessed a major crackdown by the Jammu and Kashmir Police, reflecting a more aggressive approach to tackling narco-terrorism. During the year, at least 1,000 cases were registered under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, and around 1,400 arrests were made. Those arrested included several key suppliers and peddlers believed to be part of organised drug networks.

However, officials noted a disturbing and unexpected trend during the 2025 crackdown: a growing involvement of women and couples in the narcotics trade. In Jammu district alone, police arrested 35 women on drug-related charges. Investigators also uncovered the existence of all-women networks operating with the specific aim of evading law enforcement detection.

Security officials believe this shift mirrors a broader strategy being promoted by Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). The agency is said to be encouraging terror outfits such as Jaish-e-Mohammed and Lashkar-e-Taiba to develop all-women networks of terrorists and overground workers in Jammu and Kashmir. Officials say it is no surprise that the same model is now being replicated in narcotics operations.

When the syndicates realised that the crackdown against narco-terror would be severe, they immediately changed their strategy, an official said, adding that using couples and women provides a form of social and familial cover, making detection slower and more difficult. The trend was also observed in the Faridabad module case, where Dr Shaheed Saeed, who has been arrested, played a key role.

CBI seizes Vijay's campaign vehicle used in TN's Karur

CHENNAI

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) seized actor-politician Vijay's campaign vehicle as part of its ongoing investigation into the deadly stampede that occurred during his public meeting in Karur on September 27 last year, which claimed 41 lives and left several others seriously injured.

According to officials, the campaign bus, used by Vijay during the rally and transported from Panaiyur to Karur, was currently being examined by investigators to verify movement logs, travel timings, and compliance with permissions granted for the event.

The driver of the vehicle is also being questioned to corroborate details related to the rally day schedule and crowd movement.

The tragedy reportedly occurred amid massive crowding and alleged lapses in crowd-control arrangements at the venue where Vijay addressed supporters.

Following directions to ensure an impartial inquiry, the case was transferred to the CBI, which has since intensified its probe by questioning political leaders and district-level officials associated with the event. Earlier, on November 25, senior leaders of the Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) appeared before the CBI in New Delhi. Those questioned included party General Secretary Bussy Anand, Election Campaign Management General Secretary Adhav Arjun, and Joint General Secretary C.T.R. Nirmal Kumar.

TVK Karur West District Secretary K.P. Mathiyazhagan and M.C. Paunraj were also examined.

Investigators said the leaders were questioned on a wide range of issues, including rally planning, permissions obtained, crowd estimates, security arrangements, and logistical coordination.

On December 4, Karur District Collector Thangavelam was summoned and questioned for over two hours regarding administrative approvals, inter-departmental coordination, and the response mechanisms in place on the day of the rally.

QUICK READ

Kuki-Zo MLAs will not join Manipur govt

Imphal

The Indigenous Tribal Leaders Forum (ITLF), one of the apex bodies representing tribal communities in Manipur, on Saturday reiterated that the ten MLAs belonging to the Kuki-Zo tribal community would not, under any circumstances, participate in the formation of the state government. The ITLF maintained that its stand remained unchanged, asserting that the Kuki-Zo legislators would continue to stay away from any government formation process until their core demands are addressed. The forum also underlined that the decision reflects the collective sentiment of the Kuki-Zo community amid the prevailing situation in the state.

Former Kerala CPI(M) MLA Rajendran likely to join BJP

Thiruvananthapuram

In a significant political development in Kerala, senior CPI(M) leader and three-time former Devikulam MLA S. Rajendran is set to join the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), marking a major shift in a constituency long regarded as a Left bastion. Rajendran, a prominent leader from Idukki district, confirmed on Saturday that he recently held discussions with BJP state president Rajeev Chandrasekhar. Speculation about his possible move to the BJP has been circulating for nearly three years.

JDU Rejects Tyagi's Bharat Ratna Push

Patna

The Janata Dal (United) clarified on Saturday that senior leader K C Tyagi's request to award Bihar CM Nitish Kumar the Bharat Ratna does not reflect the party's official stance. Tyagi, in a letter to PM Modi, called Kumar a "precious gem" of the socialist movement and urged the BJP-led Centre to confer the honour, citing his contributions to social justice, governance, and women's empowerment.

[Pursuant to Rule 30(6) (a) of the Companies (Incorporation) Rules, 2014]

ADVERTISEMENT TO BE PUBLISHED IN THE NEWSPAPER FOR CHANGE OF REGISTERED OFFICE OF THE COMPANY FROM ONE STATE TO ANOTHER

Before the Central Government Southern Region

In the matter of the Companies Act, 2013, Section 13(4) of Companies Act, 2013 and Rule 30(6)(a) of the Companies (Incorporation) Rules, 2014 AND

In the matter of
TRUWO LIVING PRIVATE LIMITED,
CIN: U55101KA2023PTC181932,
having its registered office at
F No C, #1102, Vaishnavi Terraces,
JP Nagar VIII phase, Bangalore,
Karnataka 560076, ... **Petitioner**

Notice is hereby given to the general public that the company proposes to make an application to the Central Government under Section 13 of the Companies Act, 2013 seeking confirmation of alteration of the Memorandum of Association of the company, in terms of the special resolution passed at the Extra Ordinary General Meeting held on **31/12/2025,** to enable the company to change its registered office from the State of Karnataka to the State of Tamil Nadu.

Any person whose interest is likely to be affected by the proposed change of the registered office of the company may deliver or cause to be delivered or send by registered post his/her objections supported by an affidavit stating the nature of his/her interest and grounds of opposition to the Regional Director, Southern Region, Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Bangalore, within fourteen days from the date of publication of this notice, with a copy to the applicant company, at its registered office mentioned below:

Truwo Living Private Limited
F No C, #1102, Vaishnavi Terraces,
JP Nagar VIII phase, Bangalore,
Karnataka 560076.

For and on behalf of the Applicant
Amulya Chandra Chintakuntla
Date: 08-01-2026
Place: Bangalore

CM Stalin rings in Pongal with 'Silambam' display

Chennai saw festive fervour and political messaging as CM M.K. Stalin joined Samathuva Pongal celebrations Sunday.

CHENNAI

M. K. Stalin took part in vibrant and politically charged Pongal celebrations in Chennai on Sunday, as he participated in the Samathuva Pongal event held at the Kolathur Assembly office, his home constituency. The celebration brought together tradition, emotion, and political messaging, drawing enthusiastic participation from party workers, local residents, and cultural performers.

Accompanied by his wife Durga Stalin, the Chief Minister distributed Pongal gift hampers and sweets to the public. In keeping with harvest festival rituals, he also personally fed cattle, symbolising gratitude to nature and livestock, an integral part of agrarian traditions in Tamil culture.

Adding a strong cultural element to the celebrations, Stalin surprised attendees by energetically performing Silambam, an ancient Tamil martial art. His spontaneous performance drew loud applause and cheers from silambam students and cadres of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), turning the event into a moment of high enthusiasm and festive spirit.

Addressing the gathering, Stalin said Pongal, the traditional festival of Tamils, was being celebrated with renewed unity and inclusiveness. He described Kolathur as a constituency that always gives him special energy. Whenever I come to Kolathur, I feel a unique sense of happiness and renewed strength. That energy is what brings me before you today, he said, highlighting his emotional bond with the constituency.

Turning to politics, the Chief Minister referred to the performance of the DMK government since assuming office. He said there was no need for him to list achievements, as party workers should take the government's work directly to the people. Stalin told cadres that 50 per cent of the groundwork for the upcoming Assembly elections had already been completed, and the remaining half would require sustained effort at the grassroots level.

He also claimed that even leaders from rival parties, including the Bharatiya Janata Party, privately acknowledged the organisational strength and grassroots reach of the DMK. Striking a confident note, Stalin reiterated that the DMK-led alliance would secure no fewer than 200 seats in the next Assembly elections.

Haryana CM releases first District Human development Report

SONIPATH

ज्ञान सेतु
Collaboration between SIHIFM and Academic Institutions
and
Launch of National Education Policy Evaluation & Validation (NEEV) Portal

Haryana unveiled its first district human development report for Sonipat, strengthening data-driven policymaking and development planning statewide.

In a landmark step towards strengthening evidence-based policymaking in Haryana, Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini on Saturday released the state's first-ever district human development report, titled the Sonipat Human Development Report 2026. The release marks a significant milestone in advancing district-level development planning and governance in the state.

The report has been prepared by the Jindal Institute of Haryana Studies (JIHS) at O.P. Jindal Global University. It represents the first systematic attempt in Haryana to assess human development indicators at the district level through detailed, data-driven analysis. Until now, the state lacked comprehensive district-level human development assessments, despite their global recognition as essential tools for identifying disparities and measuring progress.

Chief Minister Saini lauded the efforts of the JIHS team and congratulated them on the successful completion of the report. Emphasising the importance of higher education, research, policymaking, and good governance, he said such initiatives are critical for steering Haryana's development journey in alignment with the national vision of Viksit Bharat @2047. He noted that evidence-based planning at the district level would help the government design more targeted and effective interventions.

The District Human Development Reports initiative undertaken by JIHS is seen as a timely and transformative effort to capture the lived realities of people in Haryana. By providing granular insights into health, education, livelihoods, and living conditions, the reports aim to inform policy decisions that go beyond aggregate state-level indicators. Officials said the Sonipat report fills a critical gap by offering nuanced evidence that can guide district-specific development strategies.

The relevance of the initiative is underscored by emerging challenges facing Haryana, particularly environmental stress. Along with neighbouring Punjab, Haryana has come under increasing scrutiny over air pollution in the Delhi-NCR region. Deteriorating air and water quality have serious implications for public health, productivity, and overall quality of life, reinforcing the need for comprehensive human development assessments.

Lalu Prasad back in Patna after Delhi court hearing

PATNA

After a hearing at a Delhi court in the land-for-jobs case, Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) supremo and former Bihar Chief Minister Lalu Prasad Yadav returned to Patna on Saturday. He was accompanied by his eldest daughter and Patliputra Lok Sabha MP Misa Bharti.

Upon arrival at Patna Airport, Misa Bharti briefly interacted with media persons and told them that charges will be formally framed on January 29 during the next hearing in the land-for-jobs case.

Lalu Prasad Yadav had been staying in Delhi for over a month following eye treatment. He successfully underwent cataract and retina surgery at the Centre for Sight, Delhi, on December 20, 2025.

After the surgery, he was recuperating at the official residence of Misa Bharti in the national capital.

A significant ruling by the Special CBI court at Rouse Avenue has triggered fresh political turmoil within the RJD.

In the land-for-jobs scam, the court has ordered the framing of charges against Lalu Prasad Yadav, former Bihar Chief Minister Rabri Devi, their sons Tejashwi Yadav and Tej Pratap Yadav, daughter Misa Bharti, and other accused.

The court has directed that Lalu Prasad Yadav be prosecuted under various sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and the Prevention of Corruption Act.

Following the court's order, sharp reactions emerged from leaders of the ruling Janata Dal-United (JD-U).

JD-U leader and spokesperson Neeraj Kumar launched a scathing attack on the Lalu family, alleging that they had been running a criminal political syndicate and had tarnished the legacy of the socialist movement in Bihar.

He said that the court's order was a natural outcome of the family's actions and appealed for the expeditious disposal of the case.

Neeraj Kumar further demanded that the assets of the Lalu family be confiscated.

Performing artists express excitement ahead of PM Modi's visit at Somnath

SOMNATH

Ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit in Somnath for the ongoing 'Somnath Swabhiman Parv', later on Saturday, artists expressed their excitement for their performance, saying it feels great. On this occasion, an artist said, We have come to Somnath today with all the artists to perform Bharatanatyam and Kutchi Folk, which are part of our traditional art forms.

Being in Somnath, we are fully absorbed in Lord Shiva's essence here at Somnath, she added. Describing Somnath, she said it has transformed immensely in a positive manner.

Reflecting on the opportunity to perform at Somnath, another artist said, We have been performing these dances for a long time, and it feels great to be performing at this holy shrine.

Artists expressed that the venue had multiple stages to showcase their art and described the atmosphere as very positive. Prime Minister Modi is participating in the ongoing 'Somnath Swabhiman Parv', a grand four-day celebration commemorating 1,000 years of the resilience of Gujarat's iconic Somnath Temple since its first attack in January 1026 by the Mahmud of Ghazni.

Srinagar Police launched a verification drive against unregistered hotels and homestays, imposing fines and warning of legal action.

Srinagar Police Act Against Unregistered Hotels Drive

SRINAGAR

The Jammu and Kashmir Police on Saturday said it has taken action against several unregistered hotels, guesthouses, and homestays operating in Srinagar, as part of a citywide verification and inspection drive aimed at ensuring compliance with statutory norms.

In an official statement, Srinagar Police said the drive was conducted in coordination with the Tourist Police Station, Srinagar. Srinagar Police, in coordination with Tourist Police Station Srinagar, conducted a verification and inspection drive across the city to ensure compliance with statutory norms by homestays, hotels and guest houses. During the drive, several establishments were found operating without a valid registration from the competent authorities, the statement said.

According to the police, the establishments found operating without mandatory registration included hotels Essar, ABC Residency, Gani and Aksa, along with homestays Al Habib, Golden Moon and Divine Holiday. Fines were imposed on the violators for running their facilities without the required approvals. Police further said that preventive action under Sections 126 and 170 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) would be initiated against the owners of all such unregistered establishments.

Srinagar Police have advised all owners and operators of homestays, hotels and guesthouses to strictly adhere to prescribed legal requirements and ensure timely registration with the concerned authorities to avoid penal action. Officials emphasised that such verification and enforcement drives would continue in the future to promote safe, lawful and responsible tourism in the district.

The police also referred to earlier enforcement action taken in December 2025, when a hotel and a homestay in Srinagar faced legal proceedings for failing to report the stay of an Israeli national and other foreign guests to the authorities. As per rules, it is legal for foreign nationals, including Israelis, to stay in hotels in Srinagar, provided accommodation providers comply with the government's mandatory reporting requirements.

Under existing regulations, all hotels, guesthouses, houseboats and homestays across India are required to submit an online Form-C to the Foreigners Registration Office (FRO) within 24 hours of a foreign guest's arrival. Failure to comply with this requirement can invite legal action.

Akhil Gogoi shouldn't be taken seriously: Assam CM

GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Saturday took a swipe at Raijor Dal President Akhil Gogoi and said that Sivasagar MLA has become an entertainer of politicians through his social media posts.

CM Sarma told reporters here, We should not take Akhil Gogoi on a serious note. I believe that he has become an entertainer for the politicians. I watch Gogoi's 'Facebook live' to get entertained. I would suggest that he continues going live on Facebook so that we can get some entertainment.

The Chief Minister also played down Akhil Gogoi's vote chori accusations regarding the Special Revision (SR) of electoral rolls in the state.

The revision of voter rolls is conducted to have a free and fair election in the state, and the opposition parties have the right to submit appeals related to the entries in the voter list if they find any genuine people were left out of the electoral roll. Congress and Akhil Gogoi should not use every occasion as a political opportunity to attack the BJP, he added.

Notably, earlier, the BJP spokesperson Kamal Kumar Medhi also dismissed Gogoi's allegations as imaginary stories, alleging that he has been indulging in such practices for nearly two decades.

Medhi claimed that while some people may initially be swayed by Gogoi's assertions, time has repeatedly exposed them as false.

ED RAIDS CONTROVERSY

Police reaches I-PAC co-founder's residence to identify Enforcement Directorate

Continued from page 1

KOLKATA

Personnel from the Kolkata Police on Saturday afternoon reached the residence of Pratik Jain, co-founder of the Indian Political Action Committee (I-PAC), to identify officials of the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and the accompanying Central Armed Police Force (CAPF) team who were present during the central agency's raid conducted on Thursday.

According to police sources, the identification process is being carried out using footage from CCTV cameras installed at Jain's Loudon Street residence in central Kolkata. In addition, statements are being recorded from people living in the neighbourhood to corroborate the visual evidence. Police officials said that apart from Jain's family members, statements of domestic staff and personnel from the private security agency deployed at the residence are also being taken as part of the verification process.

The move follows heightened political and administrative activity after simultaneous raid and search operations were conducted by the ED at Jain's residence on Loudon Street and at the I-PAC office located in Salt Lake, on the northern outskirts of Kolkata. The central agency was accompanied by personnel from the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) during the operations.

Already, Mamata Banerjee, the Chief Minister of West Bengal, has lodged two formal complaints with the police in connection with the ED's actions. One complaint has been registered at the Shakespeare Sarani Police Station, under whose jurisdiction Jain's Loudon Street residence falls. The second complaint has been filed at the Electronic Complex Police Station, which comes under Bidhannagar City Police and has jurisdiction over I-PAC's Salt Lake office.

Sources said the police action on Saturday is part of a preliminary inquiry linked to the complaints filed by the Chief Minister. The process of identifying the ED and CAPF personnel is expected to continue, with officials scrutinising CCTV footage frame by frame and matching it with official records and testimonies.

QUICK READ

Beaten and humiliated, another Hindu youth dies in Bangladesh

Dhaka

As violence against minorities continues to mount across Bangladesh, another Hindu man died after consuming poison over a debt of 500 Bangladeshi Taka in Dirai upazila of Sunamganj district, local media reported. The victim, identified as 19-year-old Joy Mohapatra, died morning while undergoing treatment at M A G Osmani Medical College Hospital in Sylhet. Citing the deceased's cousin, Ayan Das, Bangladeshi Bengali media outlet Sylhet View 24 reported that Joy had purchased a mobile phone for 5,500 Taka from grocery shopkeeper Amirul Islam.

Pakistan to vaccinate over 45 million children

Islamabad

Pakistan will vaccinate more than 45 million children during its first nationwide polio eradication campaign of 2026, scheduled to run from February 2 to February 8, health authorities said on Saturday. The country's emergency operations centre said the week-long campaign will be conducted across the country, with vaccination teams administering oral polio vaccine to children under the age of five. The campaign will be held simultaneously in Pakistan and neighbouring Afghanistan as part of coordinated cross-border efforts to interrupt polio-virus transmission, the centre added.

Violence in Balochistan escalates

Quetta

As violence against civilians continues to escalate across Balochistan, leading human rights organisations on Saturday brought to light the extrajudicial killing of two Baloch civilians by Pakistani forces. Paank, the Baloch National Movement's Human Rights Department, mentioned that Balach Baloch, a resident of Tasp area of Panjgur district, was killed on January 8 after individuals allegedly linked to a Pakistan-backed death squad attempted to detain him and fatally shot him as he tried to flee. This killing highlights a broader pattern in Balochistan, where security forces are using proxy armed groups.

U.S. Must Control Greenland: Trump

Trump says the US must control Greenland to block future influence in the Arctic

WASHINGTON

Former U.S. President Donald Trump has said the United States needs to take ownership of Greenland to prevent Russia or China from occupying the strategically located island in the future. Speaking to reporters at the White House during a meeting with oil company executives, Trump said the issue was critical to U.S. national security and long-term geopolitical interests.

We are going to do something on Greenland whether they like it or not, Trump said, adding that failure to act could allow rival powers to establish a presence there. Because if we don't do it, Russia or China will take over Greenland, and we're not going to have Russia or China as a neighbour, he said, underlining the island's strategic importance in the Arctic region.

Trump acknowledged that the U.S. already maintains a military presence on the island under a 1951 agreement but argued that such arrangements are insufficient. According to him, ownership is essential to guarantee Greenland's defence. You defend ownership. You don't defend leases. And we'll have to defend Greenland. If we don't do it, China or Russia will, he told reporters.

Greenland, home to about 57,000 people, is an autonomous territory within the Kingdom of Denmark. While Denmark handles its foreign policy and defence, the island exercises significant self-governance. Trump's comments revive long-standing debates over Greenland's geopolitical value, particularly as melting Arctic ice opens new shipping routes and access to natural resources.

According to Trump, discussions have been ongoing within the administration on various options to bring Greenland under U.S. control. These reportedly include the potential use of the U.S. military as well as financial incentives, such as lump-sum payments to Greenlanders, aimed at persuading them to secede from Denmark and potentially join the United States. White House officials have not publicly detailed these plans, but Trump's remarks suggest a more assertive stance than previously acknowledged.

Pakistan Security Forces Kill 11 Terrorists in Twin Operations

Pakistan security forces killed 11 terrorists in two intelligence-based operations across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, military said.

KHYBER

Security forces in Pakistan have killed 11 terrorists in two separate intelligence-based operations carried out in the northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, the military's media wing said on Saturday. The operations, conducted on Thursday, targeted militants linked to Fitna Al Khawarij, a term used by authorities for operatives of the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP).

According to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the first intelligence-based operation was carried out in North Waziristan district, a region that has long been a focus of counterterrorism efforts due to militant activity. During the operation, security forces engaged the terrorists in an intense exchange of fire, resulting in the killing of six militants. ISPR said the operation was launched following credible intelligence regarding the presence and movement of terrorists in the area.

In a separate action, a joint intelligence-based operation was conducted by police and security forces in Kurram district. During this coordinated effort, five more terrorists were eliminated. The military said the joint nature of the operation highlighted improved coordination between civilian law enforcement agencies and the armed forces in counter-terrorism missions.

The ISPR reiterated that the militants killed in both operations belonged to Fitna Al Khawarij, which the state uses to describe TTP elements involved in attacks against security forces and civilians. Authorities have blamed the group for a series of violent incidents in recent months, particularly in border districts adjoining Afghanistan.

Security officials said such intelligence-driven operations are part of a broader strategy to dismantle terrorist networks, disrupt their logistics, and prevent future attacks. They added that weapons and ammunition were also recovered from the terrorists during the operations, though further details were not immediately disclosed.

Brazilian, Spanish leaders discuss Mercosur-EU deal

BRASILIA

Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva and Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez discussed the Mercosur-EU free trade agreement and the situation in Venezuela, Brazil's presidential office said. During their telephone conversation Lula thanked the Spanish government for supporting the agreement and called the deal a very positive signal in defence of multilateralism and predictable, stable trade rules.

On Venezuela, they highlighted a joint statement issued along with Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Uruguay, which rejects any division of the world into spheres of influence and opposes the use of force in international relations without authorisation under the UN Charter. They also welcomed the announcement made on Thursday in Caracas by Venezuelan National Assembly President Jorge Rodriguez on the release of Venezuelan and foreign detainees, including four Spanish nationals. Lula confirmed that Brazil sent 40 tons of dialysis supplies and medicines to help replenish stocks at a distribution centre damaged by US bombings on January 3.

The two leaders also agreed on the importance of organising a new edition of the forum In Defence of Democracy: Combating Extremism in Spain in the coming months. Additionally, Venezuela's acting President Delcy Rodriguez held phone talks with the Brazilian President, Colombian President Gustavo Petro and Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez. On her Telegram channel, Rodriguez said the leaders agreed on the importance of advancing a cooperation agenda, amid what she described as the grave criminal, illegal and illegitimate aggression perpetrated against Venezuela.

Iran accused the United States at the UN of turning peaceful protests into violent acts and widespread vandalism

Iran Accuses United States of Fueling Violence During Protests

TEHRAN

Iran has accused the United States of being responsible for what it described as the transformation of peaceful protests into violent and subversive acts inside the country. The allegation was made by Iran's ambassador to the United Nations Security Council during a formal session, highlighting rising diplomatic tensions between Tehran and Washington.

Addressing the council, the Iranian envoy said external interference by the United States had played a decisive role in escalating unrest and encouraging acts of vandalism during demonstrations. According to the ambassador, protests that initially began as peaceful expressions of public concern were deliberately pushed towards violence through foreign influence, with the aim of destabilising the country.

The diplomat alleged that Washington has a long-standing pattern of interfering in Iran's internal affairs, accusing it of supporting destabilising narratives and encouraging disorder. He said such actions violated the principles of sovereignty and non-interference enshrined in the United Nations Charter, and called on the Security Council to recognise what Tehran views as external manipulation behind domestic unrest.

Iran has repeatedly blamed foreign actors, particularly the United States, for unrest linked to protests in recent years. Officials argue that social media campaigns, economic pressure, and political messaging from abroad have contributed to unrest by fuelling anger and misinformation. The ambassador reiterated that Iran's authorities are capable of addressing internal challenges without foreign involvement.

The statement comes amid already strained relations between Iran and the United States, marked by disputes over sanctions, regional security, and Iran's nuclear programme. Iranian officials say U.S. sanctions have exacerbated economic hardships and contributed indirectly to public dissatisfaction, while Washington maintains that sanctions target the Iranian leadership and are aimed at changing state behaviour.

U.S. representatives have previously rejected similar accusations, insisting that protests in Iran are driven by domestic grievances and that Washington supports the right to peaceful assembly and freedom of expression. They argue that responsibility for violence rests with Iranian authorities and security forces.

Pak, US begin joint anti-terrorism military exercises

KARACHI

Pakistan and the US are holding two-week-long joint anti-terrorism exercises at a counter terrorism centre in the Punjab province of the country, it was announced on Saturday.

The 13th Pakistan-United States bilateral joint exercise, 'Inspired Gambit–2026', began on Friday, the military's media wing said in a statement.

The manoeuvres are taking place at the National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC) in Pabbi town of the Kharian district, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said.

The NCTC serves as a key facility for joint anti-terrorism exercises by Pakistan with international partners like China and the US.

The exercise is being conducted in the Counter Terrorism (CT) domain, involving contingents from the armies of Pakistan and the US, the ISPR said.

China inflation ticks up in Dec, almost at 3-year high

BEIJING

China's inflation ticked up in the final month of 2025 -- highest in 34 months and the decline in producer prices further narrowed as government policies aimed at boosting domestic demand continued to make a positive impact on the economy. With the New Year's spending boost, China's consumer price index (CPI), a main gauge of inflation, rose 0.8 per cent year on year in December, data from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) showed.

The CPI increase in December expanded by 0.1 percentage points compared to the previous month, reaching the highest level since March 2023, NBS statistician Dong Lijuan said, attributing the widened price increase primarily to the expansion in food price growth. In December, food prices gained 1.1 per cent year on year.

The core CPI, which excludes food and energy prices, was up 1.2 percent from a year ago last month, the data showed. In December, the CPI in urban regions rose 0.9 per cent, beating a milder 0.6 per cent increase in rural regions.

Pakistan, U.S. Begin Joint Counter-Terrorism Military Exercises at NCTC

KARACHI

Pakistan and the United States have commenced joint anti-terrorism military exercises at the National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC) in Pabbi town of Punjab's Kharian, the military's media wing said on Saturday, January 10, 2026. The exercises are aimed at enhancing professional skills, interoperability, and coordination between the armed forces of the two countries in counter-terrorism operations.

According to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the joint drills bring together troops from Pakistan's security forces and the U.S. military to train in a realistic counter-terrorism environment. The programme focuses on sharing best practices, tactical procedures, and operational experiences to address evolving security challenges, including asymmetric threats and militant violence.

The NCTC in Pabbi is one of Pakistan's premier counter-terrorism training facilities, designed to simulate complex operational scenarios. Officials said the centre provides an ideal setting for joint training, allowing participating forces to rehearse urban operations, hostage rescue, room clearing, and intelligence-based missions under controlled but realistic conditions.

Military officials noted that the exercises underscore the importance both countries place on sustained defence cooperation, particularly in the area of counter-terrorism.

SU DO KU

Brain-Bender: Can You Solve It?

	5	1		9			2	
	4				5		3	8
6		8	1		2	9		
8		4		2	3			7
	3		6			5		
5		7	9		4		8	
	1	3		4		8		
4		6			9		7	1
9			3		1	4		2

3	8	6	5	4	2	7	1	9
1	5	4	9	7	6	2	8	3
7	2	9	1	8	3	6	4	5
5	7	8	2	9	1	3	6	4
4	3	2	6	5	7	1	9	8
9	6	1	8	3	4	5	7	2
2	9	7	3	1	8	4	5	6
6	1	5	4	2	9	8	3	7
8	4	3	7	6	5	9	2	1

Solutions to Yesterday's puzzle

Fill a 9×9 grid with numbers so that each row, column and 3×3 section contain all of the digits between 1 and 9.

KOREA DRONE TENSIONS

N.Korea Accuses South Korea of Drone Intrusions

SEOUL

North Korea's military on Saturday accused South Korea of flying drones across the heavily fortified border between the two nations, issuing a sharp warning that Seoul would face consequences for what it described as unpardonable hysteria. The accusation adds to already heightened tensions on the Korean Peninsula, where relations between the two rivals have remained strained amid ongoing military activities and political rhetoric.

In a statement carried by state media, North Korea claimed that South Korean drones violated its airspace earlier this week. The North's military authorities said such actions constituted a serious provocation and a direct challenge to its sovereignty and security. While specific details regarding the number of drones or the exact locations of the alleged incursions were not provided, the statement warned that Pyongyang would not tolerate what it sees as repeated hostile acts.

The accusation comes against the backdrop of persistent mistrust between North Korea and South Korea, whose border is marked by the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), one of the most heavily guarded frontiers in the world. North Korean officials have frequently accused Seoul and its allies of surveillance activities, particularly involving drones, reconnaissance aircraft, and joint military exercises.

South Korea has not immediately responded publicly to the allegations. In past instances, Seoul has either denied similar claims or said its military activities were defensive in nature and conducted within international norms. Analysts note that accusations of drone intrusions have become a recurring theme in inter-Korean tensions, often coinciding with broader diplomatic or military developments.

The North Korean military's warning language was unusually strong, with officials saying South Korea would bear responsibility for any fallout resulting from such actions. The statement described the alleged drone flights as reckless and accused Seoul of stoking instability through what it termed irrational behavior. Such rhetoric reflects Pyongyang's broader strategy of using strong language to deter perceived threats and to signal resolve to both domestic and international audiences.

QUICK READ

PhonePe Payment Gateway launches Bolt

New Delhi

PhonePe Payment Gateway (PhonePe PG) on Saturday announced the launch of 'PhonePe PG Bolt' for Visa and Mastercard Credit and Debit card transactions. The solution utilises device tokenisation to provide a secure and efficient in-app checkout experience for PhonePe platform users and merchant partners. This feature allows users to tokenise their Mastercard and Visa cards once on the PhonePe app, enabling them to use their saved cards across any merchant integrated with PhonePe PG instead of having to tokenise their card separately with every merchant.

India's REITs market cap likely to double by 2030

New Delhi

India's Real Estate Investment Trust (REIT) market is poised for significant growth due to under penetration as REITs currently cover only 19 per cent of the country's listed real estate value, a report said on Saturday. The report from real estate services firm Vestian said market capitalisation is projected to almost double from $18 billion in 2025 to $25 billion by 2030, while REIT able office assets to double from Rs 8.2 trillion in 2025 to Rs 16 trillion. The global average of listed real estate value in REITs is at 57 per cent compared to 19 per cent of India, highlighting relative under-penetration, and huge headroom for long-term growth, according to the report.

ICICI Lombard reports WhatsApp leak

New Delhi

ICICI Lombard General Insurance said on Saturday that a designated employee inadvertently uploaded draft Q3 FY26 financial figures to his personal WhatsApp status. However, the firm said that upon becoming aware of this incident within an hour, the designated person deleted the above WhatsApp Status from the phone. We would like to inform you that a designated person of the Company inadvertently uploaded certain information pertaining to an unaudited draft financial results of the Company for the quarter and nine months ended December 31, 2025.

India–Oman CEPA to Transform Bilateral Trade

NEW DELHI

India–Oman CEPA promises duty-free access, higher trade volumes, stronger supply chains, and expanded opportunities for exporters worldwide growth

The Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) between India and Oman establishes a wide-ranging and forward-looking framework aimed at significantly deepening economic engagement between the two countries. According to an official statement issued on Saturday, the agreement covers trade in goods and services, investment flows, professional mobility, and regulatory cooperation, while maintaining a carefully balanced approach to market access and safeguard measures.

Trade and commerce have long been a central pillar of India–Oman relations, and both governments have acknowledged the untapped potential for further expansion and diversification. This momentum is already evident in recent figures. Bilateral trade reached $10.61 billion during FY 2024–25, marking a substantial rise from $8.94 billion in FY 2023–24. The upward trajectory has continued into the current fiscal year, with trade during April–October 2025 touching $6.48 billion, underscoring sustained growth and resilience in economic ties.

A key highlight of the CEPA is the unprecedented market access it provides to Indian exporters. Under the agreement, India secures 100 per cent duty-free access to the Omani market, covering 98.08 per cent of Oman's tariff lines and accounting for 99.38 per cent of India's trade value, based on the 2022–23 average. Notably, all zero-duty concessions will apply from the very first day the agreement enters into force, offering immediate certainty and predictability for businesses.

This represents a major shift from the current Most Favoured Nation (MFN) regime, under which only 15.33 per cent of India's export value and 11.34 per cent of tariff lines entered Oman at zero duty during the 2022–24 period. With the CEPA in place, Indian exports previously facing duties of up to 5 per cent, valued at approximately $3.64 billion—are expected to become more price-competitive, boosting demand and market share.

The agreement opens up fresh export opportunities across a wide range of sectors, including engineering goods, pharmaceuticals, agriculture and processed food, marine products, textiles, chemicals, electronics, plastics, and gems and jewellery.

India Achieves Record Clean Energy Growth in 2025

NEW DELHI

India achieved record clean energy growth in 2025, driven by strong policies, renewable expansion and leadership focus.

India recorded a landmark year in clean energy growth in 2025, reflecting decisive policy direction, long-term vision, and sustained implementation, Union Minister for New and Renewable Energy Pralhad Joshi said on Saturday. The achievement, he noted, underscores the country's steady progress towards energy security, climate responsibility, and a self-reliant green economy under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

In a post on social media platform X, Joshi said India's clean energy transition gathered unprecedented momentum during the year. India marked a record-breaking year in clean energy in 2025, he wrote, adding that the progress reflected consistent policymaking and focused execution by the Centre. According to him, the developments have significantly strengthened India's journey towards sustainable growth while reducing dependence on conventional energy sources.

Highlighting the scale of expansion, Joshi said India's non-fossil fuel-based power capacity rose sharply to 266.78 gigawatts in 2025. This marked a robust year-on-year growth of 22.6 per cent, demonstrating the impact of a clear policy roadmap and long-term commitment to renewable energy development. He explained that such growth is central to India's broader goals of ensuring reliable power supply, meeting climate commitments, and supporting economic resilience.

Solar energy emerged as the biggest driver of this clean energy surge. India's installed solar power capacity climbed to 135.81 gigawatts in 2025, registering a significant increase of 38.8 per cent compared to the previous year. The rapid expansion reflects large-scale solar installations, improved infrastructure, and supportive government schemes aimed at accelerating adoption across utility-scale and distributed segments.

Wind energy also posted steady gains during the year. Installed wind power capacity rose to 54.51 gigawatts, reflecting a growth of 13.2 per cent in 2025.

SEBI proposes unified trading rulebook to simplify rules

MUMBAI

Markets regulator Securities and Exchanges Board of India (SEBI) has proposed a comprehensive overhaul of trading related rules at stock exchanges to consolidate overlapping provisions and ease compliance for market participants. The consultation paper recommended merging overlapping provisions on trading, price bands, circuit breakers, bulk and block deal disclosures, call auctions and liquidity enhancement schemes, according to an official statement.

The regulator proposed a total of 54 changes which include merging rules covering both equity and commodity segments into a single framework. The merging involves provisions on margin trading facility (MTF), unique client codes, PAN requirements, trading hours and daily price limits. Disclosure related provisions for bulk deals and block deals may be merged together. Further clarity may be provided on bulk deal disclosure, i.e. bulk deal information be disseminated by exchanges at client level (i.e. at PAN level) executed across members, the statement said.

Provisions applicable to clearing corporations should be separated into a dedicated master circular to avoid regulatory overlap, the regulator said. Penalty levied by Exchanges and Clearing Corporations should be uniform for modification of client codes and OTR allocations, the statement added.

DFS interventions help improve financial health of Indian banking sector

MUMBAI

The strategic interventions by the Department of Financial Services (DFS) has improved the financial health and robustness of banking sector significantly, with gross NPA ratio of scheduled commercial banks (SCBs) declining to 2.22 per cent and that of scheduled commercial banks (PSBs) declining to 2.58 per cent, an official statement said on Saturday. Furthermore, the Provision coverage ratio (PCR) of SCBs increased from 49.31 per cent in March 2015 to a healthy 93.14 per cent in March 2025.

During FY 2024-25, SCBs have recorded highest ever aggregate net profit of Rs 4.01 lakh crore. PSBs have also recorded highest ever aggregate net profit of Rs 1.78 lakh crore during FY 2024-25. Further, the net profit of PSBs during the first half of FY 2025-26 was Rs 0.94 lakh crore.

Global deposits and global advances of PSBs increased from 71.95 lakh crore and 56.16 lakh crore in March 2015 to 146.27 lakh crore and 114.85 lakh crore, respectively in September 2025.

PSBs declared dividend of Rs 34,990 crore (GoI share Rs 22,699 crore) in FY 2024-25 against total dividend of Rs 27,830 crore to shareholders (GoI share Rs 18,013 crore) in FY 2023-24, according to an official statement. In digital payments, the DFS has strengthened its leadership role, driving consistent growth through the DIGIDHAN Mission.

The total digital payment transactions volume increased to 22,831 crore in FY 2024-25 at a CAGR of 41 per cent, from 2,071 crore in FY 2017-18. The value of transactions has grown from Rs 1,962 lakh crore to Rs 3,509 lakh crore, according to a Ministry of Finance statement.

PMMSY's skill development push is empowering fishers, promoting scientific practices, and strengthening India's fisheries value chain

PMMSY Focus on Skill Development Empowers Fishers

NEW DELHI

The Government of India has intensified efforts to empower fishers and fish farmers by strengthening skill development and capacity building under the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY). The initiative aims to enhance technical skills, encourage the adoption of scientific and modern practices, and ensure environmentally responsible operations across the fisheries and aquaculture sector, officials said on Saturday.

According to the government, skill development and capacity building have been identified as critical enablers for modernising the fisheries value chain. Over the last six months alone, as many as 499 training programmes were conducted under PMMSY, benefitting a total of 22,921 participants across the country. These programmes were designed to equip fishers, fish farmers, entrepreneurs, and allied stakeholders with contemporary technologies and best practices, enabling them to improve productivity and sustainability.

By focusing on human resource development, the initiative seeks to reduce post-harvest losses, enhance product quality, and establish stronger market linkages. Officials noted that improved technical know-how and institutional capacity are essential for increasing efficiency throughout the value chain, from production and harvesting to storage, processing, and marketing.

The programme is being implemented under the leadership of the Department of Fisheries, which has played a key role in driving training and outreach initiatives nationwide. The department said the effort has not only empowered stakeholders at the grassroots level but has also laid a strong foundation for the long-term growth and resilience of the fisheries and aquaculture sector.

Highlighting the broader impact, the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying stated that the initiative would help unlock the sector's full potential. This initiative will ultimately contribute towards unlocking the potential of the sector, generating employment and thus contributing to the socio-economic growth of the nation, the ministry said.

PMMSY's emphasis on skill development is also aligned with national priorities of food security and nutritional well-being. By empowering fishing communities with knowledge and modern practices, the scheme supports sustainable livelihoods while ensuring a steady supply of quality fish and fishery products.

India, EU reaffirm strong political resolve to address pending issues

NEW DELHI

India and the European Union (EU) have reaffirmed the strong political resolve on either side to address pending issues through constructive engagement towards a mutually-beneficial free trade agreement (FTA), an official statement said on Saturday. During the latest ministerial-level discussions, both sides emphasised the strategic importance of concluding a fair, balanced, and ambitious agreement that aligns with their shared values, economic priorities, and commitment to a rules-based trading framework, said Ministry of Commerce and Industry in a statement.

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal concluded a significant two-day visit to Brussels, marking a decisive step forward in the India-EU FTA negotiations.

In a series of high-level dialogues with Commissioner for Trade and Economic Security, Maros Sefcovic, both leaders provided guidance to negotiating teams to resolve pending issues and expedite the agreement.

The visit capped a week of intensive diplomatic and technical engagements in Brussels, underscoring the political resolve of both sides to deliver a comprehensive deal.

The meetings focused on stocktaking the progress achieved across various negotiating tracks. The officials worked to narrow divergences and ensure clarity on outstanding issues, clearing the path for the Ministerial dialogue, said the statement.

During their engagement, Goyal and Sefcovic carried out detailed deliberations across key areas of the proposed agreement. Both sides took note of the steady progress achieved across various negotiating tracks including Market Access for Goods, Rules of Origin and Services, etc, it added.

The Ministerial-level discussions reaffirmed the strong political resolve on either side to address pending issues through constructive engagement. Both sides emphasized the strategic importance of concluding a fair, balanced, and ambitious agreement that aligns with their shared values, economic priorities, and commitment to a rules-based trading framework.

India's energy planning validated in real-world conditions: Minister

NEW DELHI

Union Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas Hardeep Singh Puri said on Saturday that India's energy planning is being tested and validated in real world conditions as infrastructure and services scale up rapidly across the country. In a social media post on the X platform, Puri said India's natural gas pipeline length has nearly doubled from 15,000 km in 2014 to 25,429 km today, with 33,475 km planned, proving preparation is ahead of demand.

The minister said that energy planning is tested every day, in real-world conditions, adding 1.58 crore kitchens now receive piped natural gas without the need to book refills, calling it evidence that planning is working.

When vehicles access cleaner fuel at 8,428 CNG stations, scaling to 18,336 by 2030, plans are holding the ground, he noted.

Puri added that India's energy systems are built to be ready before pressure peaks and said that under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, planning is measured by how smoothly daily life runs.

In another post, Puri said he interacted with professionals from various sectors at 'Energy Dialogues' held in Chennai.

The minister discussed India's confident strides in areas of biofuels blending, CBG, urea imports, aviation fuels, gas infrastructure needs, and exploration of critical minerals. India is poised to become the third largest economy in the world, accounting for more than 35 per cent of the overall increase in global energy demand in the next two decades, he said.

ENNORE POWER EXPANSION

Tamil Nadu to revive stalled Ennore thermal expansion

CHENNAI

The Tamil Nadu government has taken a fresh step to revive the long-delayed expansion of the Ennore Thermal Power Station, inviting bids to complete the project through a public-private partnership (PPP) model amid mounting electricity demand in the State. The Tamil Nadu Power Generation Corporation Limited (Tamil Nadu Power Generation Corporation Limited) has issued tenders to set up a 1×660 MW supercritical coal-fired thermal power unit at Ennore on a design, build, finance, own and operate (DBFOO) basis.

TANGEDCO will function as the nodal agency on behalf of the Tamil Nadu Power Distribution Corporation Limited (Tamil Nadu Power Distribution Corporation Limited), which will procure electricity from the project under a long-term power purchase agreement (PPA).

The expansion project was originally approved by the State government in March 2012 to augment generation capacity at the Ennore complex.

An engineering, procurement and construction (EPC) contract was awarded to a private firm in May 2014, with the unit scheduled to be commissioned by January 2018.

However, construction came to a standstill due to the contractor's financial distress, and by March 2018, physical progress had fallen below 20 per cent. The contract was terminated the following month. In a subsequent attempt to salvage the project, the partially completed works were re-awarded to another firm in December 2019 on an as-is-where-is basis.

That effort too failed to gain momentum, and the contract was terminated in February 2024, citing unsatisfactory execution, leaving the project idle for several years.

Against this backdrop, the State has opted for the PPP route, citing the urgent need to add reliable base-load capacity. The revived project will have an installed capacity of 660 MW, of which 617 MW will be contracted for supply to the State utility.

Kohli, Rohit take centre stage as India eye winning start to N Z ODIs

India bank on experience as revamped New Zealand test depth in three-match series

VADODARA

Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma are set to dominate the spotlight as India begin their three-match ODI series against a new-look New Zealand at the Baroda Cricket Association Stadium in Kotambi today, aiming for a confident start in the 50-over format.

Despite the T20 World Cup looming less than a month away, the ODI series holds significance for India, who have fielded a near full-strength squad. Kohli and Rohit arrive in prime form, having turned out in the Vijay Hazare Trophy and amassed runs that underlined their enduring class and hunger.

India captain Shubman Gill, however, faces scrutiny after being left out of the T20 World Cup squad. His return to the ODI XI is likely to push Yashasvi Jaiswal out of the top order, despite the youngster scoring his maiden ODI hundred against South Africa. The comeback of Shreyas Iyer is expected to restore stability at No. 4, ending a phase of constant experimentation.

KL Rahul's continued role as wicketkeeper-batter keeps Rishabh Pant on the sidelines, while Ravindra Jadeja's full-intensity training suggests he is ready to shoulder all-round duties. With Jasprit Bumrah and Hardik Pandya rested, India's pace attack will rely on Mohammed Siraj, Arshdeep Singh, Prasidh Krishna and Harshit Rana, supported by a spin trio of Kuldeep Yadav, Jadeja and Washington Sundar.

For New Zealand, the series is less about last year's Champions Trophy final loss and more about testing depth. Several frontline players are missing, including Kane Williamson, Mitchell Santner and Tom Latham, but the Black Caps remain committed to their disciplined team-first approach.

Probable XIs

INDIA

• Shubman Gill (C), Yashasvi Jaiswal, Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharma, Shreyas Iyer, KL Rahul (WK), Ravindra Jadeja, Washington Sundar, Kuldeep Yadav, Mohammed Siraj, Arshdeep Singh

Bench options:

Rishabh Pant (WK), Nitish Kumar Reddy, Prasidh Krishna, Harshit Rana

NEW ZEALAND

• Michael Bracewell (C), Devon Conway (WK), Will Young, Henry Nicholls, Daryl Mitchell, Glenn Phillips, Josh Clarkson, Kyle Jamieson, Adithya Ashok, Zak Foulkes, Jayden Lennox

Bench options:

Mitchell Hay (WK), Nick Kelly, Kristian Clarke, Michael Rae

Uncertainty over WC venues weighs on players as B'desh seek clarity

It's affecting us but we're acting as if it's ok: B'desh Test captain on T20WC impasse

DHAKA

Bangladesh Test captain Najmul Hossain Shanto has admitted that the ongoing uncertainty over the team's participation in next month's T20 World Cup in India is taking a psychological toll on the players, even as they attempt to maintain a professional front.

Bangladesh's World Cup campaign has been clouded by controversy after the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) requested the ICC to shift the team's matches out of India, citing security concerns. The move followed the release of pacer Mustafizur Rahman from the IPL on instructions from the BCCI, which referred to unspecified "developments all around".

Addressing reporters, Shanto said such off-field distractions have historically affected the team's preparation for global events. "Before every World Cup, something seems to happen. From my experience of three World Cups, it does have an effect," he said, adding that while players try to behave as if nothing is wrong, the strain is real.

"We act as if nothing affects us, that we are fully professional cricketers. But everyone understands we are acting. It's not easy," Shanto admitted. He stressed that the players are trying to focus on performance despite circumstances beyond their control.

Bangladesh are scheduled to play four matches in India — three in Kolkata and one in Mumbai — when the tournament begins on February 7. Shanto said the team's approach would be to compete with the right mindset regardless of venue.

SA20 growth, commercial success and grassroots impact underline league's expanding ambitions

Want to create a larger pool of South African players: Graeme Smith

DURBAN

SA20 league commissioner Graeme Smith has underlined the tournament's long-term vision of expanding South Africa's player base, saying the league's future growth depends on developing greater depth in domestic talent.

Speaking to media amid an SA20 season disrupted by unseasonal rain, the former South Africa captain acknowledged logistical challenges caused by a December start but stressed that the league continues to gain momentum. Smith said crowd attendance, viewership and digital engagement have risen sharply in the first half of the season, despite four washouts in the opening 17 matches.

According to Smith, ticket sales have increased by nearly 30 per cent compared to the same stage last season, with four more sold-out matches already recorded. Viewership has grown both in South Africa and overseas, particularly in India, while improved pitch quality has resulted in closer contests, super overs and several last-over finishes.

Beyond on-field action, Smith highlighted SA20's broader social and economic impact. He said the league generated more than 4 billion rand for the South African economy last year and created approximately 8,500 jobs. A portion of revenues has flowed back into Cricket South Africa and into SA20-run development programmes, including school initiatives across more than 700 institutions for boys and girls.

Shubman Gill on exclusion from T20 World Cup squad

Shubman Gill accepted his T20 World Cup omission philosophically, respected selectors' decision, and shifted focus to India's New Zealand series

VADODARA

India's ODI and Test captain Shubman Gill on Saturday struck a philosophical note after being left out of the T20 World Cup squad, saying he respects the selectors' decision and will continue to focus on performing whenever given the opportunity.

The 26-year-old, who leads India in the longer formats, was not considered for next month's T20 World Cup despite being a regular in the white-ball setup over the last few years. Gill has featured in 36 T20 Internationals, scoring 869 runs at an average of 28.03 with a strike rate of 138.59.

"I am where I have to be and whatever is written in my destiny no one can take that from me," Gill told reporters on the eve of the first ODI against New Zealand here on Sunday. "A player always believes he will try his best for the country and the selectors have taken their decision. I try to stay in the moment; it makes life simpler."

India will play three ODIs followed by three T20Is against New Zealand as part of their build-up to the World Cup, which begins on February 7. Gill said the upcoming series remains important, recalling his fond memories of making his ODI debut against the Black Caps.

"I don't think any format is easy. If you look at it, India haven't won an ODI World Cup since 2011. Every format requires effort and determination," he said.

Gill also reflected on the challenges of injuries and preparation. He missed the second Test against South Africa and the subsequent ODI series in November due to a neck injury that required hospitalisation.

"It's never easy watching from the sidelines. As captain, you want momentum and continuity," he said, stressing the need for adequate preparation when switching formats.

"Preparation is a big thing for me. It's good to have time when transitioning between white-ball and red-ball cricket," Gill added, reiterating his focus on the present and future opportunities.

Nihal Sarin clinches Tata Steel Chess Rapid title, Vishy Anand finishes half a point behind

KOLKATA

Young Indian Grandmaster Nihal Sarin produced a composed and mature display to win the Tata Steel Chess India Rapid 'Open' title, edging out five-time world champion Viswanathan Anand in a closely contested field.

The 21-year-old sealed the title in the ninth and final round by holding Anand to a calm draw, finishing the tournament with 6.5 points. Anand followed closely in second place with six points, while Arjun Erigaisi, fresh from double bronze medals at the World Rapid and Blitz Championships in Doha, claimed third with five points.

The triumph was made more poignant by personal loss. Nihal revealed that his maternal grandfather, who first introduced him to chess, had passed away just a day earlier. "Yesterday night I got the news that my maternal grandfather who taught me chess had passed away. I would like to dedicate this tournament victory to him," Nihal said.

Earlier in the tournament, Nihal showcased impressive resilience and defensive precision. He held firm against American Grandmaster Wesley So's sacrificial attack and navigated a tense encounter with R Praggnanandhaa that ended with bare kings on the board. His consistency across rounds ensured he stayed ahead of a tightly packed leaderboard.

Aryna Sabalenka into third straight Brisbane final ahead of Australian Open

BRISBANE

World number one Aryna Sabalenka underlined her strong early-season form by reaching her third straight Brisbane International final with a confident straight-sets win over Karolina Muchova on Saturday. The Belarusian defeated the Czech 6-3, 6-4 in 89 minutes, continuing her preparations for the Australian Open, where she is chasing a third title in four years. Despite Muchova having won their previous three encounters, Sabalenka remained composed, breaking once in each set and dictating play with controlled aggression from the baseline. She said her improved focus helped her overcome a traditionally difficult opponent. Sabalenka has not dropped a set in Brisbane this week and feels her level is improving with every match. With several top-10 players in the draw, she believes the tournament has provided ideal preparation ahead of Melbourne. The defending champion will face Jessica Pegula or Marta Kostyuk in Sunday's final.

More incentives planned for national sports federations

CHENNAI

Enhancing financial support for National Sports Federations (NSFs), hosting more international competitions and launching a National Olympic Academy emerged as key outcomes of the Indian Olympic Association's (IOA) Annual General Meeting held in Ahmedabad.

The AGM, delayed from December, was attended by representatives of almost all NSFs and athletes, and focused on aligning stakeholders as India prepares to host the Commonwealth Games and continues its bid for the 2036 Olympic Games. IOA president PT Usha stressed the need for collaboration and athlete-centric reforms. "This AGM reflects our collective commitment to reform, transparency and placing athlete welfare at the heart of every initiative," she said.

A major decision involved increasing annual grants to NSFs and State Olympic Associations. IOA Chief Executive Officer and spokesperson Raghuram Iyer said revenue sharing was a key discussion point. Annual grants to NSFs have been doubled from Rs 10 lakh to Rs 20 lakh, while state associations will now receive Rs 10 lakh, up from Rs 7 lakh.

However, Iyer clarified that grants to state units will be conditional. "They must follow IOA guidelines on good governance, professional functioning and proper utilisation of funds for sports development," he said.

The IOA also plans to incentivise hosting international events in India, complementing the sports ministry's push in that direction. Proposed grants include around Rs 50 lakh for world-level events, Rs 30 lakh for Asian competitions and Rs 20 lakh for Commonwealth-level tournaments, subject to quality benchmarks such as participation strength and competitive standards. Another significant initiative discussed was the launch of a National Olympic Academy, aimed at supporting athletes beyond competition.

TN Dragons sign off home leg with win

CHENNAI

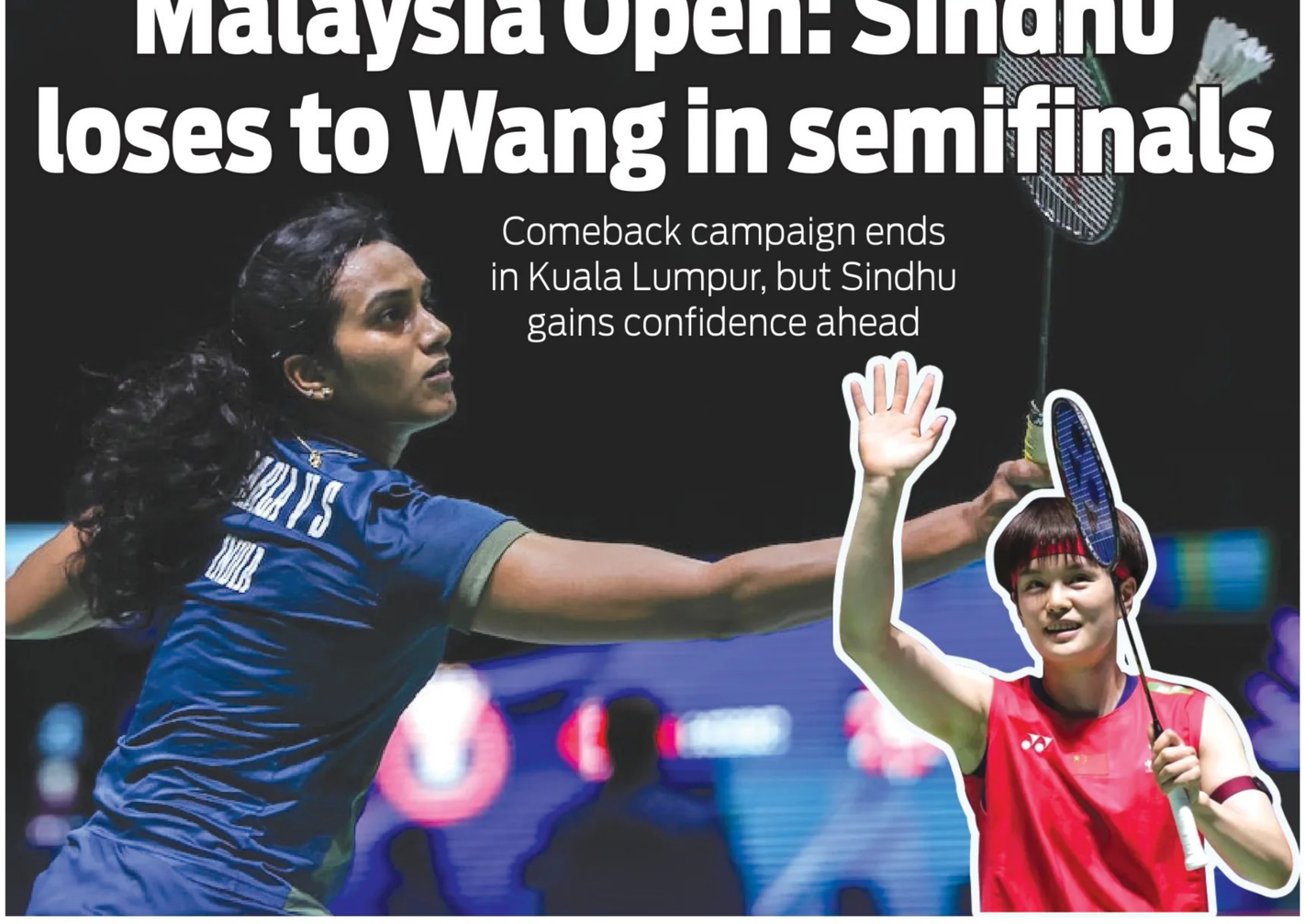
Hosts Accord Tamil Nadu Dragons brought the curtains down on their home leg in dramatic fashion, edging past SG Pipers via a shootout in a high-scoring Hockey India League encounter at the Mayor Radhakrishnan Stadium. The contest ended level at 4-4 after regulation time before the match moved into a tense shootout. While SG Pipers converted four of their five attempts — all through penalty strokes following repeated fouls by Dragons goalkeeper Prince Deep Singh — the hosts held their nerve to score all five of their efforts, securing a crucial bonus point to round off their Chennai stint on a positive note.

For the Dragons, Amit Rohidas (9'), Paul Philipp Kaufmann (17'), Tom Craig (18') and Selvaraj Kanagaraj (40') found the back of the net. The Pipers responded through Tomas Domene (13', 18'), Ky Willott (38') and Aditya Lalage (59') in an evenly matched regulation contest that saw momentum swing both ways.

Earlier in the day, JSW Soorma Hockey Club registered their first points of the season with a 3-1 shootout victory over Hyderabad Toofans after the teams were locked 1-1 at the end of regulation time. Indian skipper Harmanpreet Singh once again proved decisive, converting his attempt with trademark calm to guide Soorma through a nervy finish. Both sides were guilty of errors during regulation time and the shootout, with Toofans' Zachary Wallace, Arshdeep Singh and Rajinder Singh denied by goalkeeper Vincent Vanasch.

Malaysia Open: Sindhu loses to Wang in semifinals

Comeback campaign ends in Kuala Lumpur, but Sindhu gains confidence ahead



KUALA LUMPUR

Ace Indian shuttler P V Sindhu's promising run at the season-opening Malaysia Open Super 1000 ended in the semifinals on Saturday after a straight-game loss to China's Wang Zhiyi.

Playing her first tournament since returning from a foot injury that sidelined her for nearly three months, the two-time Olympic medallist went down 16-21, 15-21 to the world number two in a match that lasted 47 minutes. The defeat also marked the end of India's campaign at the prestigious event.

Sindhu began aggressively, taking the fight to her higher-ranked opponent with powerful smashes and effective use of her reach. She raced to early leads in both games but struggled to maintain momentum, with unforced errors proving costly at crucial stages.

In the opening game, Sindhu surged ahead 5-2 and later 9-7, only for Wang to claw back with superior net play and sharp placement. From 15-14, the Chinese shuttler raised the intensity, mixing steep attacks with well-judged lifts to pull away and pocket the first game.

The second game saw Sindhu assert control once again, building an 11-6 lead at the interval through disciplined rallies and precise angles. However, Wang responded strongly after the break, stepping up the pace and capitalising on Sindhu's errors to draw level at 13-13 before edging ahead decisively.

Reflecting on the match, the 30-year-old admitted she missed opportunities. "At 11-6, maybe I should have taken a few more points. There were small errors, and in matches like these, that makes the difference," Sindhu said.

Despite the loss, Sindhu remained upbeat about her comeback. "It was a good tournament for me, especially after coming back from injury. It gives me confidence and motivation," she added.

Sindhu will next compete at the India Open Super 750 in New Delhi, hoping to build on the positives from her Kuala Lumpur outing as the season gathers momentum.

Neeraj Chopra splits with Czech coach Jan Zelezny

NEW DELHI

Two-time Olympic medallist Neeraj Chopra on Saturday announced that he has ended his partnership with legendary Czech coach Jan Zelezny after just one season, describing the collaboration as a phase marked by "progress, respect, and a shared love for the sport."

Chopra did not spell out the reasons behind the split with Zelezny, a bonafide icon of javelin throwing and the world record holder, but underlined the immense value he derived from working with someone he had admired since childhood. The partnership was significant, with Chopra breaching the 90-metre barrier for the first time last year during the Doha Diamond League.

Reflecting on their time together, the Indian star said the experience gave him a completely new "toolbox of exercises, technical ideas, and fresh perspectives."

"Working with Jan opened my eyes to so many new ideas. The way he thinks about technique, rhythm, and movement is incredible, and I learned from every single session," Chopra said.

Beyond technical growth, Chopra emphasised the personal bond they formed. "What I'm most proud of is the friendship I've built with someone who has been my idol all my life. Jan is not only the greatest javelin thrower ever, but also one of the best human beings I've met," he added.

The 59-year-old Zelezny also spoke warmly about the partnership, calling it a rewarding experience. He noted that apart from the World Championships, Chopra finished no worse than second in competitions during their stint together. Zelezny also recalled how a back injury suffered just days before the Tokyo World Championships affected Chopra's prospects.

Looking ahead, Chopra said he plans to take greater ownership of his coaching direction as he builds toward future goals. Having begun his 2026 preparations in early November, the Indian ace stressed that staying healthy remains the priority, with eyes firmly set on the 2027 World Championships and the 2028 Olympic Games.

Chopra had finished eighth at the World Championships following his historic 90m-plus throw in Doha last year.

Olympic champion ends brief but fruitful coaching stint, eyes independent preparation ahead

Hussain defends questioning McCullum after Ashes exchange

LONDON

Former England captain Nasser Hussain has revisited his tense on-air exchange with head coach Brendon McCullum, offering fresh context to the question that appeared to strike a nerve following England's chastening 4–1 Ashes defeat in Australia.

McCullum has remained under scrutiny since England's aggressive "Bazball" philosophy faltered badly in Australian conditions, prompting debate over whether the approach needs refinement. In the aftermath of the final Test at the Sydney Cricket Ground, Hussain pressed McCullum on whether he was prepared to adapt his methods or continue backing the same ideology regardless of results.

"Can you personally change, or is it the Brendon McCullum philosophy? Can you change your ways, or is this how you're going to play?" Hussain asked during the exchange.

McCullum responded firmly, making it clear he felt the question misrepresented his thinking. "I sort of take offence to that, to be honest, Nas. I have conviction in my methods, but I'm not rigid in my beliefs," the England coach replied, stressing that adaptability had always been part of his coaching outlook.

Reflecting on the moment, Hussain said McCullum "took umbrage" at the question but insisted it was rooted in concern for England's long-term progress. He acknowledged McCullum's right to believe strongly in his methods, while arguing that the Ashes defeat underlined the need for flexibility.

Díaz shines again as hosts Morocco edge Cameroon to book semifinal berth

Díaz scores again as Morocco, Senegal reach AFCON semifinals

RABAT

Brahim Díaz continued his remarkable scoring streak as host nation Morocco defeated five-time champions Cameroon 2-0 to reach the semifinals of the Africa Cup of Nations on Friday, joining Senegal in the last four.

The Real Madrid forward etched his name deeper into tournament history by scoring in a fifth consecutive match, extending his own Moroccan record. Díaz opened the scoring in the 27th minute, instinctively prodding Ayoub El Kaabi's corner-bound header into the net with his groin. The goal sparked wild celebrations inside the near-capacity Prince Moulay Abdellah Stadium, where close to 70,000 fans roared the Atlas Lions forward.

Morocco dominated large spells of the first half and could have added to their tally earlier, but were denied by heroic Cameroonian defending, including a spectacular goal-line clearance from captain Nouhou Tolo. Cameroon's resistance finally broke again in the 74th minute when Ismael Saibari drilled a low shot inside the far post following another corner, moments after substitute Georges-Kévin Nkoudou had threatened at the other end. "It wasn't a perfect match," admitted Morocco coach Walid Regragui. "We lost some control in the second half, but the most important thing is we are in the semifinals."

The victory marked Morocco's first win over Cameroon in five Africa Cup meetings and keeps alive the hosts' hopes of lifting the title on home soil. Díaz, tireless throughout, was substituted in the final minute to a standing ovation and will enjoy an extra day's rest ahead of the semifinals.

Morocco will next face either Nigeria or Algeria on Wednesday.

Earlier, Senegal also progressed to the semifinals with a hard-fought 1-0 win over 10-man Mali in Tangier. Iliman Ndiaye scored the decisive goal in the 27th minute after Mali goalkeeper Djigui Diarra spilled a cross. Mali's task became tougher when captain Yves Bissouma was sent off before halftime. Senegal, champions in 2021, will now await the winner of the Ivory Coast–Egypt quarterfinal in the first semifinal on Wednesday.

Premier League: Slot Highlights Liverpool's Struggles Breaking down Low Blocks

LIVERPOOL

Liverpool manager Arne Slot rued his team's lack of creativity in the final third after a goalless draw with Arsenal in the Premier League.

Defending champions Liverpool failed to register a shot on target for the first time in a league match since March 2010 against Wigan Athletic, ending a 600-game run. Slot said the result exposed the challenges his side faces against teams employing a low block.

"I've said 150 times already that against certain playing styles, we're a very good team, and against certain playing styles we struggle," Slot told Sky Sports. "Even against Arsenal's low block, we struggled to create chances. That is something we would like to do better. That's one of the reasons we're so many points behind them."

Despite a nine-game unbeaten run, Liverpool remain fourth, 14 points behind league leaders Arsenal, who sit six points clear of Manchester City and Aston Villa. Slot noted that Liverpool's shots-on-target average has dropped from 6.1 last season to just four this term, reflecting difficulties in breaking down compact defences. "The only thing we missed from us, not for the first time, is the moments around the box," he said. "You're hoping to create even more chances, but against an Arsenal team that has great momentum, to put in a performance like this is something I'm very positive about."

Bengaluru Tennis Open: Pedro Martínez lives up to his top billing

BENGALURU

Spain's Pedro Martínez justified his top billing at the Bengaluru Tennis Open with a composed and clinical performance, defeating France's Matteo Martineau 7-6 (4), 6-1 to storm into the final at the SM Krishna Tennis Stadium.

The top seed and world No. 96, Martínez was made to work hard in the opening set by the spirited Martineau, ranked 319, who showcased his trademark retrieval skills and surprised the Spaniard with sharp winners. Martineau even earned a crucial break in the sixth game, briefly unsettling Martínez and drawing the crowd into an evenly poised contest that saw limited rallies but plenty of intent from both players.

However, Martínez's experience and baseline authority came to the fore as the set progressed. The 28-year-old Spaniard tightened his returns and began exploiting Martineau's one-handed backhand, steadily clawing his way back. The tie-break exposed the gulf in class, with Martínez firing down big serves and capitalising on his opponent's wavering confidence to seal the set.

From there, it was one-way traffic. Martínez raised his intensity in the second set, dictating play with depth and precision while breaking Martineau in consecutive service games. The Frenchman struggled to regain rhythm on serve, allowing Martínez to wrap up the match in just over an hour.

Martínez will now face sixth seed Timofey Skatov of Kazakhstan in what promises to be a marquee final. Skatov earned his place with a solid 6-4, 6-3 victory over second seed Harold Mayot of France. Exploiting Mayot's limited backhand due to a wrist injury, Skatov broke once in each set and held firm under late pressure.

Indian interest ended in the doubles semifinals, where top seeds N Sriram Balaji and Austria's Neil Oberleitner bowed out after a hard-fought 6-7 (4), 6-7 (3) loss to third seeds Arthur Reymond and Luca Sanchez. The French pair will meet Nicolas Barrientos and Benjamin Kittay in the doubles final. With Martínez in commanding form and Skatov unbeaten all week, the Bengaluru Open is set for a high-quality climax.

Alcaraz Downs Sinner in South Korea Exhibition Ahead of Aus Open

INCHEON

Carlos Alcaraz defeated Italy's Jannik Sinner 7-5, 7-6 (8/6) in a sold-out exhibition match on Saturday in Incheon, South Korea, ahead of the Australian Open.

The world number one from Spain and the world number two from Italy made their first appearances of the year before the Melbourne Grand Slam, entertaining an enthusiastic crowd of 12,000 at Inspire Arena. The match, lasting one hour and 47 minutes, combined competitive play with light-hearted showmanship, including trick shots and playful interactions with fans.

Reports suggest both players earned over $2 million each for the event, though organisers have not confirmed the figures. The exhibition allowed the pair to warm up ahead of the season's first ma-

jor while delighting fans with a mix of serious tennis and crowd-pleasing antics.

Alcaraz and Sinner have dominated men's tennis over the past two years, splitting all four Grand Slam titles in 2024 and 2025. Despite their rivalry on court, the duo share a friendly off-court relationship. Alcaraz now leads their head-to-head 10-6, giving him a psychological edge going into the Australian Open, where Sinner is the defending two-time champion.

The 22-year-old Spaniard, two years younger than Sinner, has yet to progress beyond the quarter-finals at Melbourne, the only Grand Slam he has not won. Saturday's exhibition victory offers a confidence boost ahead of the serious competition in Melbourne starting January 18.

Both players will now turn their focus to the Australian Open, where the rivalry that has shaped the last two years of men's tennis promises high-stakes drama.

Vanilla hour explores love trauma courage again

Author Neer Ya has released her new novel, Vanilla Hour, a touching story that moves between Delhi and Tokyo. The book follows Dr. Nandini Yadav, a well known geochemist who has rebuilt her life after deep personal pain. She lives in Japan with her teenage daughter Aani and shares a caring but unusual bond with her former husband Karan and his wife Yuki.

Though her life appears calm, Nandini is troubled by memories of a violent attack and the sudden loss of Anoop Krishnamurthy, her first love from college days. Her past returns when a reunion in Goa brings her face to face with Anoop after many years.

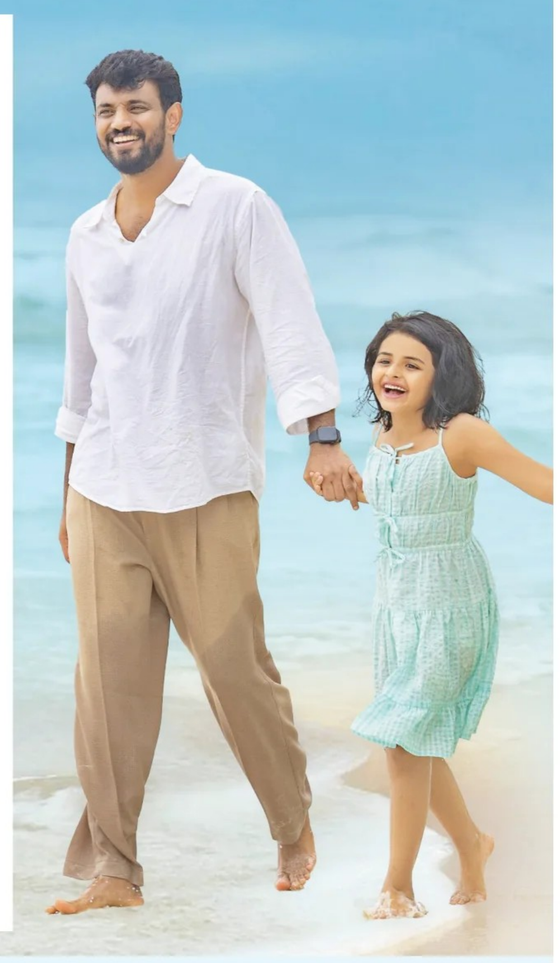
Old feelings rise, along with hidden secrets about Aani's birth. Danger grows when Alan, the man tied to Nandini's trauma, comes back, and Anoop's own dark past involving crime in Jakarta is revealed.

As threats close in, the story turns into a tense journey of survival, truth, and forgiveness. Vanilla Hour explores family, buried pain, and the bravery needed to begin again, even when the past refuses to stay silent. Readers are taken on an emotional ride that blends love, loss, suspense, hope, and strength, making the novel deeply relatable today.

Yash's 'Toxic' teaser sparks online violence debate

The teaser of Yash's upcoming film Toxic: A Fairy Tale for Grown-Ups has sparked intense online debate due to its depiction of violence involving a female character. The teaser features Yash as gangster Raya sitting calmly in a car while violent action plays out outside, leading to criticism around objectification, consent, and gender portrayal. Director Geetu Mohandas, who had earlier criticised films like Kasaba for objectifying women, responded through cryptic Instagram posts. One post mentioned "female pleasure, consent, women playing systems," triggering further discussion. She later identified the woman as Beatriz Bach, calling her "my cemetery girl," hinting at deeper narrative layers. Despite this, reactions remain divided, with critics calling the scene an endorsement of toxic masculinity, while others urge viewers to wait for the full story. The controversy highlights ongoing industry debates on responsible storytelling and representation.

Love Mocktail 3 returns with emotional turn



Sandalwood's most celebrated romantic saga is poised for a grand return this summer. Actor-director Darling Krishna has officially confirmed that Love Mocktail 3 will hit theaters on April 10, 2026, aiming to capture the lucrative summer holiday window.

Following the massive success of the original 2020 hit and its 2022 sequel, the third installment arrives with a significant shift in narrative tone. While the first two films anchored themselves in the romantic trials of the protagonist, Adi, Darling Krishna has revealed that this chapter will pivot toward a deeply personal father-daughter relationship.

Produced under the KRiSMe Productions (or Krishna Talkies) banner by real-life couple Darling Krishna and Milana Nagaraj, the film is being described as the most "emotionally intense" chapter yet. "Every chapter of Love Mocktail is about discovering love in all its forms," Krishna shared during the date announcement. "This one celebrates a father's love for his daughter, a theme that feels timely and incredibly close to my heart."

The transition into a family drama was hinted at in the recently released motion poster, which featured the soulful track "Neene Neene," composed and sung by Nakul Abhyankar.

PRODUCTION & CAST HIGHLIGHTS

The film reunites a familiar ensemble while introducing fresh faces to the "Mocktail" universe: Milana Nagaraj, Amrutha Iyengar, Rachel David, and Abhilash Dhalapathi. The new addition includes child artist Samvrutha, who plays a pivotal role in the father-daughter arc. The technical crew consists of Sri Crazy Minds returning for cinematography and editing, ensuring the franchise's signature visual aesthetic remains intact. The production team wrapped up principal photography in late 2025, completing the shoot in a swift 35-day schedule. With post-production now finalized, the team is shifting gears into a high-decibel promotional campaign leading up to the April release. Despite some online debate regarding the continuation of the series, anticipation remains high. Fans are eager to see how Krishna evolves the character of Adi in this "new kind of love experience" that promises to deepen the legacy of one of Kannada cinema's most beloved franchises.

Film censor debate sparks over Vijay's Jana Nayagan

Film censorship in India has come under scrutiny after Thalapathy Vijay's Jana Nayagan faced delays in certification, eventually reaching the Madras High Court. The CBFC's initial refusal to grant a UA certificate led the court to direct immediate approval. Filmmakers reacted strongly, with Sandeep Reddy Vanga stating that the censor board should be run by senior directors and industry experts who understand filmmaking. Ram Gopal Varma questioned the relevance of censorship in the streaming era, where content is freely accessible online. The controversy has reignited calls for reform, balancing creative freedom with responsible content regulation.

'Wrong Words' video song launched to raise awareness

The Wrong Words video album, highlighting a new government bill on hate speech, was recently launched at Renukamba Studio. Produced by Radical Concept Studio, the five-minute song combines lyrics, music, and visuals to spread awareness about the law.

Bengaluru-based filmmaker and automobile engineer Nehesh Poll appears in the video, handling direction, music, and lyrics. Speaking at the launch, he explained that the bill, issued last month, criminalizes hate speech or speaking against a community, with penalties of up to ₹50,000 and seven years in prison. The bill has not yet received approval from the Governor, and Poll said the public remains largely unaware. "I cannot use wrong words. If I do, I will be arrested. I have no other words," he remarked.

Poll also shared that the video project includes a model road initiative aimed at transparency, showing each step live from the Vidhana Souda steps. The production featured creative head Akshara Suresh, with cinematography and editing by Sagar. During the launch, Poll entertained media representatives by playing the guitar, emphasizing both the artistic and civic purpose of the project. The song aims to educate viewers about the new bill while demonstrating how citizens and artists can contribute to public awareness through creative media.

Dimple Hayathi embraces traditional wife role onscreen

Dimple Hayathi, known for her glamorous image and bold photo shoots, has mostly been seen in modern, stylish roles in Telugu films like Khiladi and Gaddalakonda Ganesh. In her latest film, Bhartha Mahasahayulaku Wignyapthi, she surprises audiences by playing a simple and traditional wife's role.

Speaking about the film, Dimple said the story immediately attracted her. Director Kishore Tirumala's narration helped her deeply connect with her character, Balamani. After portraying a modern girl opposite Ravi Teja earlier, she felt this role gave her the opportunity to explore a completely different emotional space.

Calling the experience pleasant, Dimple said this was her second film with Ravi Teja and praised his supportive nature on set. She also hinted at a surprise element in the film that she believes will strongly resonate with audiences.

On a personal note, she shared her love for Sankranthi, celebrated with her grandparents in Chennai. Looking ahead, Dimple confirmed her next release Bhogi with Sharwanand, set for 2026, marking an exciting phase in her evolving Telugu film career.

Prabhas old getup scenes added back to film

The makers of The Raja Saab have added back scenes showing Prabhas in an old man look after audience feedback. In the second half of the film, Prabhas is seen sitting on a chair belonging to Sanjay Dutt inside a lonely palace set deep in the Narsapur forest. Earlier, the scene ended suddenly, leaving viewers confused and curious.

Before release, a poster showing Prabhas in the old age getup had created strong interest. However, when the film reached theatres, many fans felt important moments were missing. The movie was criticised for uneven storytelling, unclear links between scenes, and a long runtime.

Producer TG Vishwa Prasad has now confirmed that a four minute sequence featuring Prabhas in the old look has been added. He explained that the scene could not be included earlier, but has now been restored. To balance the film, a few other portions were trimmed.

Directed by Maruthi, the film's total runtime remains unchanged. Since the length stayed the same, no new censor approval was needed. The revised version is currently playing in theatres, offering viewers a clearer and more complete story. Fans hope these changes improve flow and strengthen the narrative, allowing Prabhas performance and the film vision to connect better with audiences.

ASHIKA *feels fortunate working with stars*

Ashika Ranganath has said she feels grateful to share screen space with popular stars early in her career. She is one of the female leads in Ravi Teja's upcoming family entertainer Bhartha Mahasayulaku Wignyapthi, directed by Kishore Tirumala, which is set to release on January 13, 2026.

Speaking about the film, Ashika said she had wanted to work with Kishore Tirumala for a long time. Though an earlier collaboration did not happen, she instantly connected with this story. She plays Manasa Shetty, a modern young woman whom today's audience can easily relate to. The director, she added, had imagined her in the role from the beginning. Ashika said the character is very different from her role in Naa Saami Ranga and gives her a fresh acting space. She believes viewers will feel the change on screen. Talking about Ravi Teja, Ashika admitted matching his energy was challenging. She praised his ability to balance humour and emotion and thanked the director for guiding her, especially as she continues learning Telugu.

She plays Manasa Shetty, a modern young woman whom today's audience can easily relate to.

Looking ahead, Ashika shared that she is part of Vishvambhara, Sardar 2, and Adi Naa Pillara. She said she feels lucky to receive such big opportunities at an early stage of her journey in the film industry today and beyond ahead.

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